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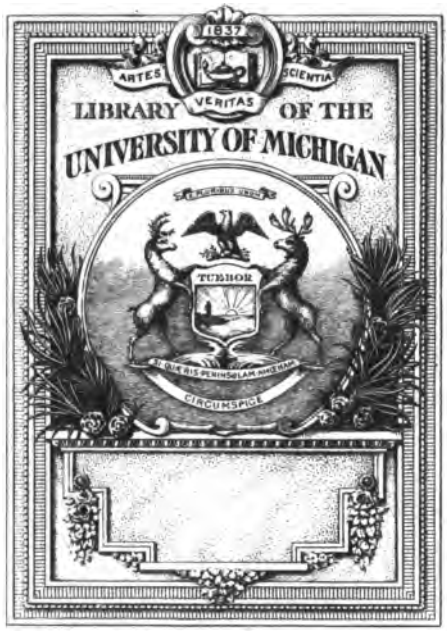
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THE WORTH OF A WOMAN

A POINT OF LAW

THE WORKS OF DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS

The Worth of a Woman
Old Wives for New
Light-Fingered Gentry
The Second Generation

The Deluge
The Social Secretary
The Plum Tree
The Cost
The Master Rogue
Golden Fleece
A Woman Ventures
The Great God Success

David Graham Phillips

THE WORTH OF A WOMAN

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

FOLLOWED BY

A POINT OF LAW

A DRAMATIC INCIDENT

NEW YORK
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1908

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Published September, 1908

Lilian
Friedman
6-25-25
12052

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

WAS it not a straw in the wind of these times that no one of any consequence raised the cry of immorality against this play? A few years ago, as to the most important and most interesting subject in the world, the relations of the sexes, an author had to choose between silence and telling those distorted truths beside which plain lying seems almost white and quite harmless. And as no author could afford to be silent on the subject that underlies all subjects, our literature, in so far as it attempted to deal with the most vital phases of human nature, was beneath contempt. The authors who knew they were lying sank almost as low as the nasty-nice purveyors of fake idealism and candied pruriency who fancied they were writing the truth. Now it almost seems that the day of lying conscious and unconscious is about run. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

There are three ways of dealing with the sex relations of men and women—two wrong and one right.

For lack of more accurate names the two wrong ways may be called respectively the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental. Both are in essence processes of

spicing up and coloring up perfectly innocuous facts of nature to make them poisonously attractive to perverted palates. The wishy-washy literature and the wishy-washy morality on which it is based are not one stage more—or less—rotten than the libertine literature and the libertine morality on which it is based. So far as degrading effect is concerned, the "pure, sweet" story or play, false to nature, false to true morality, propagandist of indecent emotions disguised as idealism, need yield nothing to the so-called "strong" story. Both pander to different forms of the same diseased craving for the unnatural. Both produce moral atrophy. The one tends to encourage the shallow and unthinking in ignorance of life and so causes them to suffer the merciless penalties of ignorance. The other tends to miseducate the shallow and unthinking, to give them a ruinously false notion of the delights of vice. The Anglo-Saxon "morality" is like a nude figure salaciously draped; the Continental "strength" is like a nude figure salaciously distorted. The Anglo-Saxon article reeks the stench of disinfectants; the Continental reeks the stench of degenerate perfume. The Continental shouts "Hypocrisy!" at the Anglo-Saxon; the Anglo-Saxon shouts "Filthiness!" at the Continental. Both are right; they are twin sisters of the same horrid mother. And an author of either allegiance has to have many a redeeming grace of style, of character drawing, of philosophy, to gain him tolerance in a clean mind.

There is the third and right way of dealing with the sex relations of men and women. That is the way of simple candor and naturalness. Treat the sex question as you would any other question. Don't treat it reverently; don't treat it rakishly. Treat it naturally. Don't insult your intelligence and lower your moral tone by thinking about either the decency or the indecency of matters that are familiar, undeniable, and unchangeable facts of life. Don't look on woman as mere female, but as human being. Remember that she has a mind and a heart as well as a body. In a sentence, don't join in the prurient clamor of "purity" hypocrites and "strong" libertines that exaggerates and distorts the most commonplace, if the most important feature of life. Let us try to be as sensible about sex as we are trying to be about all the other phenomena of the universe in this more enlightened day.

Nothing so sweetens a sin or so delights a sinner as getting big-eyed about it and him. Those of us who are naughty aren't nearly so naughty as we like to think; nor are those of us who are nice nearly so nice. Our virtues and our failings are—perhaps to an unsuspected degree—the result of the circumstances in which we are placed. The way to improve individuals is to improve these circumstances; and the way to start at improving the circumstances is by looking honestly and fearlessly at things as they are. We must know our world and ourselves before we can know

what should be kept and what changed. And the beginning of this wisdom is in seeing sex relations rationally. Until that fundamental matter is brought under the sway of good common sense, improvement in other directions will be slow indeed. Let us stop lying—to others—to ourselves.

The "Worth of a Woman" is not a problem; it is a love story—an agitated day in the lives of two young Americans. Every story illustrates something. This story illustrates— But you may read for yourself. It was not written for children of whatever age between protracted infancy and premature senility. It was written with the hope of interesting grown people of any age, of either sex, of all conditions.

It was first played in New York City last February at the Madison Square Theater. It was presented by Walter N. Lawrence, staged and directed by George Foster Platt. Miss Katherine Grey took the part of *Diana*, made of it a living figure of grace and beauty and strength. To her and to Mr. Platt and Mr. Lawrence the author is indebted for suggestions that were valuable and for a sympathy that was invaluable.

"A Point of Law" has been played several times by amateurs in various parts of the country.

D. G. P.

July, 1908.

CONTENTS

THE WORTH OF A WOMAN

PAGE

Act I 3

Act II 36

Act III 64

Act IV 95

A POINT OF LAW 109

THE WORTH OF A WOMAN

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

HUBERT MERIVALE . . . . . Of Clifty Farm

DIANA MERIVALE . His younger daughter, manager of the farm

PHYLLIS DAGMAR . . . . . His elder daughter

LUCIUS DAGMAR . . . . . Husband of Phyllis

JULIAN BURROUGHS . . . A young lawyer from the East

THE REV. EBEN WOODRUFF, D.D., Merivale's life-long friend

MAGGIE SALYERS . . . . . Housekeeper

BILLY . . . . . Man-of-all-work

SCENE—Clifty Farm, in the valley of the Ohio

TIME—A July day

ACT I

The library at Clifty Farm. The walls are filled book-shelves, the furniture old-fashioned mahogany. A large table desk with cigars, cigarettes, writing materials; a smaller table to the right with books and magazines. In the rear wall, great French windows thrown wide and revealing a railed and columned veranda; it views from an eminence a harvest-time landscape of gentle hills and valleys with a broad river in the distance. On the veranda, in a wicker chair under an awning umbrella, white, with green lining, sits HUBERT MERIVALE, *owner of the farm—white hair, smooth-shaven, deeply wrinkled face, strong, rather stern, intellectual. He is dressed in white linen and a Panama; an ebony cane with a gold knob leans against his chair. He is reading and making notes at a book-strewn wicker table beside him. The door to the right opens and* MAGGIE SALYERS, *the housekeeper, crosses toward the left, carrying an armful of cut flowers.. At sight of* MR. MERIVALE *she halts.*

SCENE I.—MERIVALE—MAGGIE.

MAGGIE. If I was to ask him what day it is, he wouldn't know. My, what a thinker! Always at big

serious books that it makes a body headachy to look at. But always with the gay band on his Panama, and the tie to match—Miss Diana looks out for that. [*Sees a telegram on the large table.*] "Miss Diana Merivale." Probably the one she's so eager about. Mr. Merivale!

[MERIVALE *does not hear.*

MAGGIE. Mr. Merivale!

[MERIVALE *frowns, mutters, sighs like a disturbed sleeper, resumes his work.*

MAGGIE. Mr. Merivale!

MERIVALE. Eh? . . . Ah? . . . What? . . . You, Maggie? Oh, yes. Um—where was I? [*Returns to his work, saying abstractedly,*] My dear child, the first law of human intercourse is, "Don't interrupt!" [*With a kindly, absent smile.*] Your interruption has perhaps slain an immortal thought. [*Quite absorbed again.*] Whether or no the soul is immortal, certain it is there are immortal thoughts. Perhaps Milton and Hugo were right, and some souls, like some thoughts, are immortal, others not.

MAGGIE. [*Holding up the telegram.*] Isn't this telegram on the table here the one Miss Diana wanted as soon as it came?

MERIVALE. [*Staring at her dazedly.*] Yes? . . . Eh? . . . Telegram? . . . How came it there? . . . Ah! [*He rises, confused and ashamed.*] Inexcusable! Diana particularly enjoined me!

MAGGIE. Yes, sir—she asked us all to be on the lookout.

MERIVALE. [*Self-reproachfully.*] And Peter brought it to me, to know what to do about it—

MAGGIE. Peter ought to have come to me.

MERIVALE. No—no—it was my fault—entirely my fault. I vaguely recall he asked me some question, and I—I must have been—not listening. I'm not usually so preoccupied. [MAGGIE *smiles.*] But this morning—I've come to a most important chapter. The telegram must go to her at once.

[MAGGIE *presses an electric button to the left of the closed fireplace.*

MERIVALE. [*Walking up and down the veranda.*] It's the first time I remember Diana's asking me to do anything for her—and I neglect it! She who does everything for me, and neglects nothing!

[*Enter by door to left* BILLY, *the man-of-all-work, in shirt sleeves and collarless, his trousers held up by a broad leather belt. He has plainly been toiling and is in no very good humor.*

SCENE II.—MERIVALE—MAGGIE—BILLY.

BILLY. [*Crossly.*] Yes, Mr. Merivale.

[MERIVALE, *walking up and down the veranda, muttering to himself, does not hear.*

MAGGIE. Billy, saddle a horse and take this to Miss Diana—down to the creek farm.

BILLY. I'm busy with the rooms next to Miss Diana's—those for this here preacher that's coming.

MAGGIE. I'll have Lizzie look after them.

[*She holds out the telegram, waving it impatiently.* BILLY *advances with reluctant, hesitating step.*

BILLY. Then, there's the hall floor to be polished, and—

MERIVALE. [*Pausing, notes* BILLY.] Ah—Billy! Diana wants that telegram immediately.

BILLY. [*With complete change of manner and tone.*] Oh, if Miss *Diana* wants it—

[*He takes the telegram and hastens out by door to right.*

SCENE III.—MERIVALE—MAGGIE.

MERIVALE. Inexcusable! Inexcusable!

MAGGIE. I shouldn't worry, sir. If it's good news, it'll be the better to her for the delay. If it's bad news, she oughtn't to have it at all.

MERIVALE. She didn't tell me what it was, but—[*smiles*]—I suspect.

MAGGIE. [*With a nod and knowing smile.*] No doubt it's from—*him*. What a lovely young gentleman Mr. Burroughs is! So democratic!

MERIVALE. When you've said gentleman, you've implied democratic.

MAGGIE. It ought to be, sir, but somehow it isn't, any more.

[*She puts the flowers on the table and busies herself at rearranging small articles and polishing with her apron.*

MERIVALE. Not in the East, where he comes from. But, thank God, out here we are still Americans.

MAGGIE. Not all of us. Those that go East to school usually come back quite different.

MERIVALE. The power of a bad example over the weak-minded! . . . [*Notes the flowers as she takes them up.*] Delightful!

MAGGIE. For Dr. Woodruff's room. Miss Diana told me to have them cut fresh about the time he was due, and to put them there to welcome him, if she wasn't back to attend to it herself.

MERIVALE. She thinks of everything.

MAGGIE. Everything but herself, as Peter often says to me and me to Peter.

MERIVALE. Everything but herself. And hers is the usual reward of self-sacrifice. Those for whom she does all take her for granted.

MAGGIE. As Peter and I often say, what will become of us when she's married to Mr. Burroughs and off to that East? Of course, Miss Phyllis and her husband will be living here. But nobody could take *her* place.

MERIVALE. I don't let myself think of it. [*Sighs.*] And January will soon be here. [*Sighs again.*] But,

Maggie, we mustn't let her see how we feel. The least we can do is not to shadow her happiness. She *is* happy, don't you think?

MAGGIE. As happy as could be expected, with Mr. Burroughs gone back home nearly five weeks now.

MERIVALE. Five weeks! I should have said a few days.

MAGGIE. Naturally you don't miss him as much as she does. We all miss him. He's a fine young man, if ever there was one. I never thought I'd like an Easterner. I didn't altogether like him at first. All those Easterners seem to think that, of course, their ways are just right, and that because our ways are different, we're wrong and queer.

MERIVALE. It shouldn't irritate us, Maggie. It's only amusing. We are broader than they, and that should make us more tolerant.

MAGGIE. That's true, Mr. Merivale. I soon saw it wasn't he, but his bringing up, that was to blame.

MERIVALE. Precisely. He had been what we out here'd call badly brought up—more like an Englishman than an American. But after he'd been among us a while—out here in God's country—he showed he was one of us beneath.

MAGGIE. Indeed he is! Of course, he ain't good enough for Miss Diana. But she's blind to his faults. That's always the way with us women.

MERIVALE. Fortunately for us men.

MAGGIE. Oh, I don't know, Mr. Merivale. There's

another side to that. The men have to overlook a great deal, don't they now?

MERIVALE. [*Smiling.*] Not a *great* deal—but—something perhaps.

MAGGIE. I wouldn't admit it to Billy, but I have to laugh to myself when he says if a man wasn't a fool he'd never undertake to support a woman for life just for—for a little hugging and kissing and that, now and then.

MERIVALE. [*Absently.*] Six months until she goes —six swift months.

[MAGGIE *moves toward door to left. Enter there* LUCIUS DAGMAR, *fashionably dressed to the point of foppishness for morning in the country.* MERIVALE *eyes him and costume with tolerant, amused disapproval.*

SCENE IV.—MERIVALE—DAGMAR—MAGGIE.

DAGMAR. [*To* MAGGIE.] I just picked up the auto with the telescope. It's climbing Cresson Hill. They'll be here in a few minutes.

MAGGIE. Oh, I must hurry.

[*Exit* MAGGIE *hastily by door to left.* DAGMAR *lights a cigarette.*

SCENE V.—MERIVALE—DAGMAR.

DAGMAR. [*Speaking with a drawling nicety that seems to suit his manner and dress.*] How goes the great work this morning?

MERIVALE. [*Ignoring* DAGMAR'S *remark.*] Dr. Woodruff was in the auto with Phyllis?

DAGMAR. I've never seen him, you know. But I fancy it was he. White-haired, clerical-looking party —white whiskers—round collar—black clothes—all that. [MERIVALE *seats himself at his work again.*] What were Billy and Maggie shouting about?

MERIVALE. [*Absently.*] Telegram for Diana.

DAGMAR. Oh, *the* telegram.

MERIVALE. I don't *know* from whom, but—

[*Smiles, leans back in his chair.*

DAGMAR. So, he's taken to the telegraph, eh? The very frenzy of love. And he an Easterner—*and* a Bostonian—*and* a Burroughs—of the *Boston* Burroughses.

MERIVALE. The description hardly suggests—Julian.

DAGMAR. Nevertheless, he does come of a family of icebergs stranded in Back Bay. If we knew him well, we'd find the chill all right, all right—you can gamble on that.

MERIVALE. [*Somewhat sharply.*] We do know him.

DAGMAR. [*Soothingly.*] Not Phyllis and I. You'll remember we got back from Europe only two days before he left.

MERIVALE. He may have felt constrained with you. But I assure you he is frank—ardent—natural.

DAGMAR. [*Sitting at ease.*] He may have made

himself seem all that, just to get solid with you and Diana. But—

MERIVALE. Julian is no hypocrite, Lucius.

DAGMAR. I didn't mean to say he is. At the same time, when a man's in love—he *believes* he believes a lot of things.

MERIVALE. Julian detests sham, and laughs at pretense.

DAGMAR. Bore into him—and you'll find a Burroughs of Boston. And why not? Where's the harm?

MERIVALE. You don't know the strength of his mind.

[DAGMAR *laughs, rises, lounges up and down.*

DAGMAR. He may have honestly believed he'd been broadened. But I'm speaking of instincts—prejudices, if you please—that a man inherits—that begin to be nourished at his mother's breast. You've some of those prejudices yourself, sir.

MERIVALE. Not the kind they have in the East.

DAGMAR. Perhaps not. . . . I confess I don't wildly fancy those fashionable Eastern upper-class people. They strike me as rather—funny—bunch of goldfish swimming round in their little tank and imagining it's the universe. However—I'm a bit of a snob—and as I don't have to associate with the Burroughses, this alliance with them—

MERIVALE. Eh? Still talking Burroughses? I don't know anything about them. I'm content with

Julian, and that's sufficient. But here a man isn't a symbol of family or pocketbook.

WOODRUFF. [*Outside.*] Bertie!

[*Enter* DR. WOODRUFF *on veranda to left. He looks the successful, prosperous clergyman.* MERIVALE *rises, advances with boyish eagerness.*

SCENE VI.—MERIVALE—DAGMAR—WOODRUFF.

MERIVALE. Ben!

WOODRUFF. Hubert! Not the least changed by these eight years! Yes—the bright band on your hat, and the bright tie to show that your heart is young and gay.

[MERIVALE *and* WOODRUFF *shake hands again and again.*

MERIVALE. [*Greatly moved.*] Ben—welcome! . . . My son-in-law, Dagmar—an acquisition of two years ago.

WOODRUFF. [*Shaking hands with* DAGMAR.] Of the Chicago Dagmars, I believe?

DAGMAR. Joel Dagmar was my father—but no doubt you and Phyllis talked all that over, on the way from the station. She's great on family trees. Did you have a pleasant journey from Louisville?

WOODRUFF. A rain providentially laid the dust.

[*Enter from veranda* PHYLLIS, *a fashionable, cynically good-humored woman of thirty.*

SCENE VII.—MERIVALE—DAGMAR—WOODRUFF—PHYLLIS.

MERIVALE. [*In raillery.*] Still imagining the Almighty looks after you especially.

WOODRUFF. [*Good-naturedly.*] Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice, says the Bible.

PHYLLIS. [*From the center of the room where* DAGMAR *is helping her off with her dust coat.*] But it doesn't say either that He causes the sparrow to fall or that He stops its falling.

WOODRUFF. [*Laughing heartily and shaking his head at her.*] I came to rest and to refresh myself in the friendship of my old pal here, not to engage in theological disputation. [*Looks out over the landscape.*] This superb place! Like the garden farms of the old world. What cultivation! What taste! Great changes here in eight years, my friend.

MERIVALE. In five years—less than five. At lunch you'll see the architect of it all.

WOODRUFF. Ah — that wonderful daughter — your Diana—*our* Diana, for I feel I have a share in her. Mrs. Dagmar tells me she's to be married. [MERIVALE *nods slowly, sighs.*] And only yesterday, it seems to me, I had her on my knee, teaching her to call me Uncle Ben. Married! Phyllis tells me the young man is of the Boston Burroughses—a fine family—in the front rank of our true aristocracy.

MERIVALE. [*Dryly.*] That seems to have done him

an unusually small amount of harm—though Dagmar here has just been protesting the contrary. But I trust Diana's judgment.

WOODRUFF. [*Surveying the landscape.*] That lake must be new. It doesn't look so, but I can't recall a lake.

MERIVALE. It was Diana's idea—one of her first big improvements. She changed the course of the creek, put a dam at the edge of the valley—

[*The two link arms and go out on the veranda,* MERIVALE *talking and using his cane to point our various features in the landscape. Exeunt left.* PHYLLIS *crosses to table desk at left, busies herself with contents of shopping bag.*

SCENE VIII.—DAGMAR—PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS. [*Pausing abruptly.*] Di get her telegram?

DAGMAR. Billy took it to her. What's all this excitement about? What's in the telegram?

PHYLLIS. I wish I knew.

DAGMAR. No trouble between her and him?

PHYLLIS. None that *I* know of.

DAGMAR. I guess there isn't. Only this morning I saw a letter in the mail—for her—Boston postmark. A fat letter—three two-cent stamps. He's daft about her—if letters mean anything.

PHYLLIS. But they don't.

DAGMAR. That's a fact. The more a man—or a woman — protests — especially on paper — the less it means. Now I—

PHYLLIS. You never write at all.

DAGMAR. Exactly. And it's setting a good example, too. If I had my way, the cheapest stamp would cost a quarter. Then people wouldn't write unless they had at least a little something to say. . . . It's queer none of Julian's family has written—gad, *that's* what's been on your mind the last few weeks.

PHYLLIS. Really?

DAGMAR. But as long as your father doesn't mind—

PHYLLIS. [*Crossly.*] Conventionalities never enter his head.

DAGMAR. Or Di's.

PHYLLIS. Or Di's. [*Angrily.*] The way father's brought her up!

DAGMAR. Pretty good work, I say. She's made the whole place over—and it pays like a gold mine—mill, dairies, gardens, fancy chickens, horses, sheep, cattle—God knows what and what not. I never saw a woman like her. And so young, too. And always light-hearted. It'd be frightful if that chap . . . You know how it is with young fellows. And as long as the wedding is vague—

PHYLLIS. It's fixed for January.

DAGMAR. At his age January might look distant and hazy from June. And she's in love with him—

really in love. It's rarely a woman's in love with the man she's marrying.

PHYLLIS. *Very* rarely.

DAGMAR. Nothing personal? [PHYLLIS *nods and laughs.*] No matter. You are, now . . . To resume—No, usually a woman—unless she's an out and out hard one—*likes* the man—more or less. But she's thinking about what he can do for her—substantial things—precious little about him.

PHYLLIS. I wish it were so with Di.

DAGMAR. Rubbish!

[WOODRUFF *and* MERIVALE *appear again on the veranda from left.*

PHYLLIS. Take the old doctor away to his room. I've got something to say to father.

DAGMAR. What room's Di giving him?

PHYLLIS. The suite over the parlor.

DAGMAR. Oh, the rooms Burroughs had.

[WOODRUFF *and* MERIVALE *come into the room at window left center.*

SCENE IX.—DAGMAR—PHYLLIS—WOODRUFF—MERIVALE.

WOODRUFF. [*To* PHYLLIS.] I'm impatient to see Diana.

DAGMAR. [*Breaking in.*] She's the real thing. Her father there's brought her up—and a smashing good job he's made of it.

MERIVALE. I've brought her up like the Persian youth, Ben.

WOODRUFF. "To ride, to shoot, to speak the truth." You see I've not entirely forgotten my Xenophon. A *real* education—to ride, to shoot—to speak the truth!

DAGMAR. That's Di. Straight as a sapling.

PHYLLIS. Perhaps the doctor would like to go to him room.

DAGMAR. I'll show you, doctor—if you happen to want to trim up a bit before lunch.

WOODRUFF. Certainly, certainly.

MERIVALE. I'll go with him, Lucius.

PHYLLIS. Please stop here, father. You don't mind —do you, doctor?

WOODRUFF. Pray don't make a guest of me.

DAGMAR. Come, doctor.

WOODRUFF. You'll excuse me, Mrs. Dagmar?

PHYLLIS. Phyllis.

WOODRUFF. Phyllis! Thank you. I appreciate that.

[*Exit* WOODRUFF *and* DAGMAR *to right.*

SCENE X.—PHYLLIS—MERIVALE.

MERIVALE. Well, Phyllis?

PHYLLIS. Sit down, father, please. I want to talk with you about Julian.

MERIVALE. You're barking up the wrong tree. Go to Di. She's the authority on that subject.

PHYLLIS. When Lucius and I got back from Europe

two days before Julian left—we found he'd been here, here in this house—nearly two months.

MERIVALE. Bless me—so long as that? . . . Yes, it must have been. But I saw little of him. He was occupied, and so was I. Do you know, Phyllis, until they came and told me, three days before he left, I *never* suspected?

PHYLLIS. [*Laughing.*] Incredible! . . . [*Serious and businesslike.*] Now, father, you'd know—if you weren't so busy with the past—love and marriage no longer go handcuffed together.

MERIVALE. Handcuffed! I'll never cease regretting that I was overpersuaded by your aunt into letting you go to that fashionable New York school. Ah, my daughter, bitter will be the afternoon and evening of your life if you let that veneer eat into you. It will destroy your heart. Handcuffed!

PHYLLIS. Linked then. Love is a sentiment—marriage a business. Love's a personal matter. Marriage is a matter of family, position—prospects, pocketbook—pride, all sorts of things.

MERIVALE. Sordid. Sordid.

PHYLLIS. But highly important. Yet you've been treating this marriage as if it were a personal matter, only Diana's affair. And—you've been letting Julian treat it the same way.

MERIVALE. It *is* personal.

PHYLLIS. In a sense, yes. But how about Julian's family?

MERIVALE. [*Carelessly.*] I don't understand. Some of your muddy worldliness, I suppose.

PHYLLIS. Not at all, father. You've not heard from Julian's people.

MERIVALE. Well, what of that? They'll get round to it. Everybody isn't as energetic about trifles as you are, Phyllis. I can sympathize with anyone's not writing letters.

PHYLLIS. Don't you know why you haven't heard?

MERIVALE. [*Indifferent.*] No, and I don't care. Julian's family doesn't greatly interest me. I know him, and he's sound. That's enough.

PHYLLIS. [*Impatiently.*] How do you know he's sound? You met him—just happened to meet him—when he came out here about that railroad right of way. You knew nothing then of him, or his people. Yet you invited him to visit *here.*

MERIVALE. Why not?

PHYLLIS. But remember his people. What did *they* think when he went back home, and told them about his visit— In this house two months and Diana unchaperoned.

MERIVALE. [*Amused.*] Diana—chaperon.

PHYLLIS. Oh, I know Di needs no chaperon, still—

MERIVALE. [*Sternly.*] My dear Phyllis, nothing, *nothing* could be so bad as the spy system and its degradation of womanhood. I've brought Diana up with the only chaperon a *woman* could accept—the chaperon of her own self-respect.

PHYLLIS. That's true, father. I don't disagree with you. My own conventionality's only one skin deep. But with Julian here Di ought to have had a chaperon.

MERIVALE. If you want to make a spirited woman indiscreet, watch her.

PHYLLIS. A woman in love, or a man, either, for that matter, is a woman or man in need of watching. I've been there. I know.

MERIVALE. I'll concede *you* may have needed a chaperon. You were brought up by your Aunt Althea, and her idea of her sex is grossly physical. That a man has but one use for a woman.

PHYLLIS. Aunt Althea is a shrewd, sensible person.

MERIVALE. The men seeking to possess as cheaply as possible, the women striving to sell as dearly as possible.

PHYLLIS. Well, isn't it so? Isn't that the way of the world?

MERIVALE. I'll listen to no more of this. I'm glad to say Diana's been brought up to think and judge and decide for herself.

PHYLLIS. But I'm not talking of Diana. I'm talking of Julian's idea of her—Julian's and his people's.

MERIVALE. You're trailing the serpent of worldliness over your sister's idyll. Look at those fair reaches, Phyllis, and be ashamed. The girl who created that beauty and prosperity could not be misjudged by any man!

PHYLLIS. No, not while he was here. Not as far

as he is capable of appreciating her—he bred in worldliness — in Boston upper-class snobbishness — a very young man too. Father, you don't know men—out in the world. And—

MERIVALE. No more, no more.

[MERIVALE *moves to go.*

PHYLLIS. He's been gone *five weeks* and not a word from his family. No explanation or apology from him—no explanation. *Five—weeks.* [MERIVALE *pauses.*] That can mean only one thing. His family at least, and possibly he too, now that he's back there with them — they misunderstand us, misunderstand our Di.

[MERIVALE *walks up and down, reflecting; then he turns abruptly upon* PHYLLIS.

MERIVALE. I cannot be guilty of the impertinence of interfering.

PHYLLIS. I'm thinking of her; it's because I love her that I'm pleading with you. I like and admire him as much as you do—believe he can make Di happy. But—oh, father! A man brought up as he's been couldn't understand us. With the Easterners of his set, conventionality is god.

MERIVALE. Talk with her about it.

PHYLLIS. Of course I shall. But I want *you* to realize too—and *act.* Father, you owe it to her to guard her against her love-blindness. I'm thinking of her happiness. It's wrapped up in him.

[*A pause,* MERIVALE *reflecting.*

MERIVALE. Perhaps our ways have tempted Julian into too great indifference to formalities.

PHYLLIS. And she so frank—so trusting—so in love—and *showing* it!

MERIVALE. Beautiful!

PHYLLIS. Yes—beautiful—but— Oh, if she only weren't in *love* with him! It's dangerous—terribly dangerous—when the woman's in love—*really* in love—with the man she wants to marry. It's so hard for her to see and do the prudent things that are necessary.

MERIVALE. How low!

PHYLLIS. But how true! Where's the man who isn't tempted to undervalue what's securely his? The safe rule for the woman is to keep the man guessing and grasping. Uncertainty!—charming uncertainty!

MERIVALE. For the shallow.

PHYLLIS. We were talking of the shallow—of human beings.

MERIVALE. We were talking of Diana.

PHYLLIS. Of Julian, rather. Julian and his family.

MERIVALE. [*Reflecting.*] His family—yes, perhaps. I'll see, I'll see. Diana's happiness— I'll see.

[*Feels for his hat, looks helplessly round.*

PHYLLIS [*Laughing.*] Here it is.

[*She gives him his Panama and a caress at the same time. Exit* MERIVALE, *left.* PHYLLIS *goes to table desk, sits preparing to write a note. Enter* DAGMAR, *right.*

SCENE XI.—PHYLLIS—DAGMAR.

DAGMAR. Pleasant old parson, your friend Woodruff. Got a streak of fun in him. Well, how did you make out?

PHYLLIS. [*Carelessly.*] Oh, everything's all right.

DAGMAR. I thought so. Some day you'll learn there's nothing in this fretting like a hen on eggs. We mustn't take ourselves too seriously—we little nits on the whirling orange. When we do we're ridiculous. . . . Where *are* those cigarettes? [*Sees them on desk at left among small parcels put there by* PHYLLIS.] Oh, yes.

[*Enter* DIANA *from veranda, right. A slender, graceful girl, quick of eye and movement, with great physical charm, and irradiating open-air freedom and naturalness. She wears divided riding skirt, and is without hat.*

SCENE XII.—PHYLLIS—DAGMAR—DIANA.

DIANA. Hello, Phyl. 'Lo, Lucius.

DAGMAR. 'Lo, Di.

PHYLLIS. [*Without looking up.*] Get your telegram?

DIANA. Hours ago. I telephoned to town from the granaries and had it repeated to me. How long till lunch?

PHYLLIS. Half an hour, perhaps.

[DAGMAR *groans.*

DIANA. Heavens! I'm starved.

BILLY. [*Outside, right.*] Do you want your horse again to-day, Miss Diana?

DIANA. I'll let you know. Take him to the stable for me now, please.

BILLY. All right, Miss Diana.

[DIANA *goes to sofa, right, and flings herself carelessly upon it.*

DIANA. My, but I'm tired. I've been in the saddle since six. Lucius, those creek bottoms are going to yield eighty bushels to the acre—eighty at least.

DAGMAR. [*Joining her.*] You don't say! Most exciting. Still, it doesn't begin to account for your spirits. There's a limit to the amount of joy over eighty bushels to the acre. You're miles beyond that limit.

DIANA. Really?

PHYLLIS. [*At desk, writing.*] You've even forgotten to ask after your beloved Dr. Woodruff—your Uncle Ben, as you call him.

DIANA. You caught me there. [*Radiantly.*] Well—Julian's coming!

[PHYLLIS *startles, shows delight.*

DAGMAR. When?

DIANA. Was ever anybody so curious?

DAGMAR. Not many. I've no business of my own, so I give all my attention to other people's. . . .

When? [DIANA *laughingly shakes her head.*] Don't tease me when I'm hungry. How you do hate to tell anything. You're most unfeminine. Close-mouthed—no affectations—truthful. Most unfeminine.

DIANA. [*Glancing at a book.*] I?

DAGMAR. No, to be honest. And you act so that one'd almost believe you really liked being a woman.

DIANA. I do.

DAGMAR. Unheard of!

DIANA. Glad and proud.

DAGMAR. What an eccentric! Full of surprises.

DIANA. Thanks. I'd hate to be—like this sort of book—large print—soon read and forgotten.

DAGMAR. You're an everlasting continued-in-our-next, with a surprise at the end of each chapter. People think they know you well, when all of a sudden—Bang!

DIANA. But I'm terribly soft where I care.

DAGMAR. Yes— [*After reflecting.*] and no. Well, be happy while you're young. Only— Let him do the loving—most of it. He's quite willing—quite.

[PHYLLIS *pauses in her writing.*

DIANA. Equal shares—that's my idea.

DAGMAR. Generous, but not practical. Keep cool. Keep *sober.*

DIANA. And Julian?

DAGMAR. Oh, the man's a different matter.

DIANA. Not a bit of it.

PHYLLIS. It's the way of the world.

DIANA. [*Absently.*] Not my way—and not Julian's.

[PHYLLIS *makes an impatient gesture, resumes writing.*

DAGMAR. What a lot of trouble's waiting for you when you find him out! [*Looks at her quizzically, affectionately, shakes his head.*] How are you going to stand it?

DIANA. Stand what?

DAGMAR. Being cooped up in a city—where nobody is ever truthful or natural. I can't think of you except as ranging freely—at a gallop—roads—fences—fields—like a—a—Valkyr. How'll you stand Boston?

DIANA. [*Inattentive.*] I don't know.

DAGMAR. And those iceberg relatives! He's the only person from his particular part of the Arctic regions I ever took to. I don't envy you your fashionable relatives.

[PHYLLIS *pauses in her writing, listens without turning.*

DIANA. [*Half absently.*] I never think of them—[*Smiling.*] And I suppose they return the compliment.

DIANA. [*Dreamily.*] I never think of Julian as related to anybody—but as just—himself.

DAGMAR. [*Gently.*] Mysterious stranger—kind of Lohengrin—or fairy tale Knight-from-Nowhere.

DIANA. [*Laughing softly.*] Something like that.

DAGMAR. Um—Um— What a—what a *Di* you are!

[*Flower pots falling from the balcony crash outside the veranda rail.*

DAGMAR. Jumping Jehoshaphat!

[DAGMAR *and* PHYLLIS *rise.* DIANA *rushes out to veranda rail and looks up.*

DIANA. What is it? What's the matter?

BILLY. [*Above.*] I knocked 'em over, Miss Diana. I'm sorry.

DIANA. Oh! Father's pet heliotropes! You must get new pots at once.

BILLY. They ain't any.

DIANA. Yes, there are. I'll show you where. Come down—by the balcony stairs.

[*Exit* DIANA *on veranda, right.*

SCENE XIII.—DAGMAR—PHYLLIS.

DAGMAR. What a shock! I feel as if they'd fallen on my head.

PHYLLIS. Please leave—pretty soon. I want to be alone with Di.

DAGMAR. Take care, old girl. Go mighty easy with her. She's gentle and sweet, but—

[DIANA *reappears.*

SCENE XIV.—DAGMAR—PHYLLIS—DIANA.

DIANA. [*To* BILLY, *outside.*] There you are—and please repot them right away. [*Reënters room.*] No damage.

DAGMAR. Any signs of lunch?

PHYLLIS. Why, you had a late breakfast. Don't you ever think of anything but eating?

DAGMAR. Not if I can help it. Of course, we're going to have chicken. They always do in this neck o' the woods when the preacher comes, don't they? Chicken with gravy—not sauce, but gravy.

DIANA. I'm starving, too. Do stop talking about it. Why not find out when lunch'll be ready?

DAGMAR. I don't dare go. I'd make a dash and tear it off the stove.

PHYLLIS. [*With a meaning look at* DAGMAR.] Lucius, please go and hurry things up. The doctor, too, must be hungry after his journey.

DAGMAR. All right, Phyl. [*Pauses at veranda, sniffing.*] Talk about your zephyrs from perfumed gardens—this one comes from the kitchen!

[*Exit* DAGMAR, *left.*

SCENE XV.—PHYLLIS—DIANA.

DIANA. How's Uncle Ben looking?

PHYLLIS. [*Writing.*] About the same. I can't imagine what you and father see in him.

DIANA. A good heart.

PHYLLIS. The world's full of them. All well-fed people have good hearts.

DIANA. Not what I mean by a good heart. I used to admire brains more than anything. But latterly

it seems to me a good heart is the finest thing in the world—and the rarest. And Uncle Ben has that. I'd trust him, next to father, as I'd trust no one else in the world.

PHYLLIS. [*Indifferently.*] And Julian?

DIANA. [*Absently.*] I wonder why it is, no matter how absolutely a woman trusts the man she loves, there's always the suggestion of a possibility of a shade of a—a—tiny misgiving.

PHYLLIS. [*Turns in chair, looks at* DIANA.] You distrust Julian?

DIANA. [*Smiling.*] Distrust? No, indeed! But I've too much at stake in him not to have a flutter now and then.

PHYLLIS. A woman, especially a woman who's physically attractive, does well to distrust the man who loves her. Before marriage his love's little more than passion. Real love doesn't begin to build till after that storm has calmed.

DIANA. And then maybe it'd build, and maybe it wouldn't. [*Reflectively.*] No—I'd not marry without being sure—sure my love was real—and his, too.

PHYLLIS. Then you'll never marry.

DIANA. How cheap you hold men and women!

PHYLLIS. It's a cheap world. So— Pretend to trust him—profess to trust him—but don't really trust till you've got him tied.

DIANA. Tied!

PHYLLIS. Tied. Then—if you don't like your bargain— There's nothing permanent in the marriage ceremony.

DIANA. Except the vows.

PHYLLIS. Mere form, mere convention.

DIANA. [*Dreamily.*] When I promise to "love, honor, and cherish until death do us part," I'll mean it, just as I mean any other promise I make. Yes, Julian and I'll mean it.

[PHYLLIS *gazes tenderly at her sister, then goes over and leans on the back of the sofa, toward her.*

PHYLLIS. Di.

DIANA. Yes, dear.

PHYLLIS. Is Julian coming—soon?

DIANA. To-day—this afternoon.

PHYLLIS. I'm *so* glad! When he comes—

[*A pause.*

DIANA. Yes, Phyl?

PHYLLIS. [*Half laughing—half serious.*] You're *so* in love! What a pity! Really. I mean it. Di, he's very, *very* worth while—in every way. You must —*must*—be—a little sensible.

DIANA. [*Amused.*] In what way?

PHYLLIS. Don't be *too* frank. Don't make him so pleased with himself that he'll grow careless about pleasing you. Men are vain—easily spoiled. [DIANA

looks amused disdain.] Remember, he has the weaknesses of men as well as the strength.

DIANA. Oh, he's not perfect, thank Heaven. I'd detest a man that was.

PHYLLIS. You resent interference in your affairs, and you're right. But, Di, you'll not take it wrong if I say something?

DIANA. Nothing against Julian.

PHYLLIS. It's not against him. It's— Isn't it strange his people don't write?

DIANA. I've not thought about it.

PHYLLIS. I understand that in you. But think! Five weeks, and neither of his parents, none of his people has written.

DIANA. No doubt there's some good reason. It amounts to nothing.

PHYLLIS. It means they don't approve.

DIANA. Perhaps. What of it?

PHYLLIS. His set there in the East—his people—they'd look on his engagement to an Indiana farmer's daughter as if it were to a bushwoman in the bush. If you were enormously rich—

DIANA. [*Interrupting.*] Granted they don't approve—still, what of it? That doesn't really concern Julian and me.

PHYLLIS. But it does, dear. Their not writing is the most—pointed—rudeness. His not apologizing—Isn't that — disrespectful — to you? — [DIANA *shrugs.*] —to father? [DIANA *looks serious.*]

DIANA. [*After reflecting.*] Not at all. If they're opposing, he's ashamed of them, ashamed to have father and me know about them.

PHYLLIS. [*Kissing her.*] What a loyal, generous girl you are! No wonder he loves you—and he does love you. But Di, it's as a man loves *before* marriage. [DIANA *makes emphatic protest.*] Listen, dear. His family's not writing and he's not apologizing—I'm afraid he's gotten away off there in his Eastern conventional home—with his mother subtly working on him—and his passion cooled by distance and absence—and—

DIANA. [*Gentle but firm.*] It's useless for you to say those things to me, Phyl. Perfectly useless. We love each other, he and I.

PHYLLIS. I know. I know. But I don't want you to lose him. And when he comes, you must—

DIANA. [*Laughing.*] Lose him? Why, if he felt as you picture, I'd wish to lose him. I'd never have had his love, but only passion—only a passionate impulse.

PHYLLIS. Oh, Di! That "only"—that "passionate impulse"—it's the way we women get our husbands.

DIANA. Not I! The man I marry will not be trapped. He must want me—all of me. Not what any woman could give him—but what's really myself—what he could get from no other. The man I marry will want a woman, not merely a *female.*

PHYLLIS. Diana! Diana! You can't change human nature—*man* nature.

DIANA. [*Confidently.*] You're wrong, Phyl, you're wrong. It's not so with Julian. He loves me—*me*, I tell you. . . . Why try to poison my heart? You can't. It's his, all his—just as his is mine.

PHYLLIS. [*Heatedly.*] What I say is true of all men—true of Julian. And you couldn't blame him for being just human.

DIANA. [*Passionately.*] You can't understand *us*. We love. We trust. Love means trust.

PHYLLIS. [*Angrily.*] The love that means trust doesn't lead to marriage—not for women.

DIANA. Phyl! I'm ashamed of you!

PHYLLIS. [*Furious.*] Very well. But if you were to trust your Julian, he'd never make you his wife.

DIANA. [*Proudly.*] I do trust him. I *am* his wife!

PHYLLIS. [*Scornfully.*] Lover's talk! Why—[*She pauses, notes* DIANA'S *flushed, earnest face.*] You mean— [*Half pleased, half reproachful.*]—Oh, Di—you haven't gone and married him secretly? [DIANA *startles, betrays great confusion.*] No wonder you talked so confidently! [*Laughs.*] You impetuous, willful—

DIANA. [*Confused and with an effort.*] I—I—didn't mean—that.

PHYLLIS. [*Gazing at her with a slow change from wonder to alarm, to fear.*] Di! . . . [*Breathlessly, in*

horror.] You've—given yourself to him! Oh, Di!—*You*! . . . It can't be! It can't. Not *you*!

DIANA. [*Haughtily.*] Keep off! My soul's my own!

PHYLLIS. My *poor* Diana! What have you done! What *have* you done! My poor—poor—

DIANA. [*Sharply.*] Phyllis!—

PHYLLIS. [*Rushing toward her.*] You infatuated girl! Come to your senses! Can't you see—

[*A musical bell is heard, left. Enter* WOODRUFF, *right.*

DIANA. [*Intensely to* PHYLLIS.] It's *my* secret! Don't forget that! *Mine!*

SCENE XVI.—PHYLLIS—DIANA—WOODRUFF.

WOODRUFF. A pleasant, cheerful sound—one of the cheerfulest in the world—that bell. . . . Ah, *this* is Diana! [*Takes both her hands.*] Do you realize it is eight years—eight—since I saw you? [*Holds her by her hands at arms' length, looks into her face.*] Still those honest, fearless eyes. . . . (DIANA *shrinks and trembles.*] I embarrass you.

PHYLLIS. [*To cover* DIANA'S *confusion.*] Such flattery would startle one far less shy than our Di, doctor.

WOODRUFF. Every promise of eight years ago redeemed, more than redeemed.

DIANA. [*Mistress of herself again, and smiling af-*

fectionately at him.] You overwhelm me, Uncle Ben! —you see I've not forgotten my name for you in the eight years. I am glad—*so* glad—you're here. [*The bell rings again.*] But, I must go to my room a moment. [*To* PHYLLIS.] Please make my excuses to father for being late. And—remember what I said, Phyl. Remember!

[*Exit* DIANA *by door to right. Enter by veranda right and left* DAGMAR *and* MERIVALE. *A murmur of conversation as they move toward door to left. The bell heard again.*

CURTAIN.

ACT II

The veranda. Two window doors of the house seen at left; several large columns and rail, at back; beautiful Indiana countryside, beyond. Wicker table, chairs, and sofa. Discovered—DR. WOODRUFF, *looking at landscape through telescope;* PHYLLIS, *at left of table in center of veranda, absorbed in thought. Enter* DAGMAR *from extension of veranda to left.*

SCENE I.—WOODRUFF—DAGMAR—PHYLLIS.

WOODRUFF. This magnificent view! I can scarcely takes my eyes off it. And through the telescope—

[*He makes a gesture to indicate that he has no words to express it.*

DAGMAR. The telescope's all right, but you should see it through a highball. Oh, I beg pardon, I scandalize you.

WOODRUFF. [*With rather a strained smile.*] Not at all, not at all. My black clothes are not a mourning for a lost sense of humor.

DAGMAR. [*Looking at his watch.*] Phyl—you, Phyl!

PHYLLIS. [*Springing up.*] I've done my half hour.

DAGMAR. Twelve minutes.

WOODRUFF. I don't understand.

PHYLLIS. Lucius and I have agreed to walk five miles a day, and not to sit for at least half an hour after each meal. He wants to keep his waist, and I want to avoid hips.

WOODRUFF. [*Sitting on sofa, right.*] Very sensible rules.

DAGMAR. Phyl's threatening to renege. She talks of getting a masseuse down from Chicago. If she does, I think I'll have the lady make a few passes at my scalp. The way I've been moulting lately is something fierce. What's the good of a waistline if I'm to get bald?

[PHYLLIS *sits.*

PHYLLIS. The doctor will think we live on a very low, material plane.

DAGMAR. Don't we? He might as well have the truth first as last. I always explain to people just what I am, at the set out. Then—no unpleasant surprises.

[DAGMAR *sits.*

WOODRUFF. Why, you're sitting, both of you.

[*Both spring up, laughing.*

DAGMAR. My waistline!

WOODRUFF. No, my young friends, you hardly do me justice. I try to avoid narrowness of every kind. The only thing I'm intolerant of is intolerance.

DAGMAR. That's the talk! My creed exactly.

That's why I got after Phyl during the little discussion at lunch—when she jumped on Diana for expressing a few romantic notions about things in general—love and life and all that. Let the young girls have their sentimental dreams, I say. They're soon over, and no harm done.

WOODRUFF. I must admit, Diana's views struck me as sensible, practical. I think she's altogether right about lies and shams.

PHYLLIS. Now, doctor! You know very well that this world was made for men. And Di should realize it. Why, we women *have* to be liars in order to live.

WOODRUFF. As Diana would say, in order to live among *liars*; not in order to—*live*!

PHYLLIS. One likes to be well thought of by the people the world thinks well of. That's what *I* call living.

DAGMAR. Damn it, Phyl—I beg pardon, doctor—Di's got a right to other views. She's even got a right to her own sort of life. It's *her* life, ain't it?

WOODRUFF. [*Gazing with enthusiasm at the view of the farm.*] And a fine, noble sort it is.

PHYLLIS. [*With energy.*] I say candidly, it's a crime to encourage a girl in any liberal ideas whatever until she's married. You can never tell where a liberal idea will lead—even one that's apparently harmless.

DAGMAR. Truthfulness—a liberal idea?

PHYLLIS. Indeed it is. Men—some of them—can

perhaps afford to be themselves in this world. But not women. No woman. [*Crosses to* WOODRUFF.] Please don't forget that, doctor, in talking with my young sister.

WOODRUFF. [*Rising.*] My dear Phyllis, I see no crime in encouraging anyone to be frank—truthful—brave. Especially a girl about to be married. If you could know the miseries—the horrors—that often—too often—come through falsehoods in love and in marriage! At luncheon I had several instances on the tip of my tongue. But I refrained.

PHYLLIS. [*Dryly.*] I'm glad you did.

WOODRUFF. The longer I live the more I abhor concealments—lies of every kind. Oh, the slavery of lies!

PHYLLIS. Things have come to a pretty pass when the clergy—

DAGMAR. Oh, come now, Phyl, smooth down your feathers. Why, you act as if you were taking all this to heart.

PHYLLIS. Ridiculous. . . . You'd better see if the auto's ready. You'll be late.

DAGMAR. [*Seating himself.*] Plenty of time.

PHYLLIS. [*To* WOODRUFF.] Lucius is going for Julian.

WOODRUFF. Julian?

PHYLLIS. Mr. Burroughs.

WOODRUFF. Ah, yes. I'm anxious to make sure with my own jealous eyes that Diana has chosen well.

PHYLLIS. Do be off, Lucius.

DAGMAR. Plenty of time. Auto's waiting.

WOODRUFF. It's amazing the way these autos eat up distance and save time.

DAGMAR. Save time—that's the mischief of it. What's a man to do with all the time he saves nowadays?

PHYLLIS. Lucius, *please*!

DAGMAR. You *are* nervous to-day. Well, here goes.

[*Exit* DAGMAR *by veranda, left.*

WOODRUFF. And I think I'll settle my belongings—if you'll excuse me, Mrs. Dagmar.

PHYLLIS. Phyllis.

WOODRUFF. Phyllis—Phyllis.

[*Exit* WOODRUFF *into house.*

DIANA. [*In house.*] Oh, Uncle Ben. Going to your room?

WOODRUFF. Yes, for a little while.

[*Enter* DIANA. *She is dressed as in Act I and is carrying a new hat band of blue and white silk for* MERIVALE'S *Panama.*

SCENE II.—PHYLLIS—DIANA.

DIANA. Where's father?

PHYLLIS. Still at his nap.

PHYLLIS. [*Appealingly.*] Di!

[DIANA *hesitates, without turning.*

PHYLLIS. Don't be cross with me. You're so secretive and Spartan that I sometimes forget how sen-

sitive you are—how things affect you underneath. [*Puts her arms round her.*] You know I love you, Di?—that I'm not thinking harshly of you?

DIANA. Yes, I know. [*Kisses her shyly.*] . . . I suppose it's impossible for you to realize how it is with Julian and me. Believe me, Phyl—he *loves* me.

PHYLLIS. But if he doesn't!

[DIANA *laughs at her gently.*

DIANA. [*Carelessly.*] Why, then—of course—

[*Shrugs.*

PHYLLIS. You wouldn't *release* him!

DIANA. *Release* him! Certainly I'd release him, as you call it, if he didn't love me. But he does.

PHYLLIS. He must marry you. He's no right to take your all and cast you off.

DIANA. My all! If that's a woman's all—if that's her sole claim—her chief claim—then we women *are* low—level with the beasts.

PHYLLIS. Women have to marry. *You* must marry *him.*

DIANA. If I were simply a woman-looking-for-a-husband, I suppose I might. But I'm not. I want love—to give love, to get it. I want him because I love him and because he loves me. I want his love—not anything else—not anything less. And I'd not kill it and my own self-respect by compelling him—in the least. He shall feel free—always free!

PHYLLIS. Oh, Diana! How can you hope to get on with the world!

DIANA. The world must get on with me.

PHYLLIS. Those ideas are fine, Di. We all profess them. But we don't—can't—*act* on them. You must remember this is a human world. [DIANA *makes a disdainful gesture.*] Suppose he should take you —your love for granted. Suppose he has no real intention of *marrying* you.

DIANA. [*Laughing frankly.*] Why, Phyl!

PHYLLIS. When a man's about to do a contemptible thing, he always covers up his purpose from himself—

DIANA. But it wouldn't be contemptible, if he no longer loved me.

PHYLLIS. [*Impatiently.*] Why discuss the ought-to-be! We're facing the thing-that-is!

DIANA. Nonsense! You're talking as if Julian didn't love me. It's disloyal of me to let you do it. I love and I trust him—and I *know* he loves me.

[*Enter* MERIVALE *from house.*

SCENE III.—PHYLLIS—DIANA—MERIVALE.

DIANA. [*Holding up the hat band.*] Now, sir! I have it all ready to put on.

[PHYLLIS *walks up to the veranda rail, stands there deep in thought.*

MERIVALE. [*Laughing and taking off his hat.*] I thought you were dressing.

DIANA. You first. [*Looks at the old band.*] How I've been neglecting you! [*Seats herself,* MERIVALE *standing erect and looking lovingly down at her.*] But

we'll soon have you perfect. [*Glances up at him.*] Isn't he splendid, Phyl?

PHYLLIS. [*Absently.*] What is it?

MERIVALE. How happy you've made me. And before you came, your mother and I both hoped it would be a son!

[DIANA *with the hat in her lap fits on the new band.*

DIANA. [*Rising.*] See!

[*Holds out the hat in one hand, the old band in the other.*

MERIVALE. [*Laughing.*] Now, I realize that you certainly have neglected me. [*She puts the hat on his head as he stoops to receive it.*] But I forgive you. [*With mock severity.*] Don't let it occur again.

DIANA. Dear! [*Kisses him.*] I must rush away. There are several things to be looked after, and I've got to dress. [*To* PHYLLIS.] Don't look so sad, Phyl!

[*Exit, radiant, left.* MERIVALE *gazes after her, touching and arranging his hat.*

SCENE IV.—PHYLLIS—MERIVALE.

PHYLLIS. Father, you must have your talk with Julian before he sees Diana.

MERIVALE. [*Frowning, impatient, yet tolerant.*] I shall not meddle.

PHYLLIS. Meddle!

MERIVALE. In this household we respect one another's rights. If I should speak to Julian, Diana

would be angry—justly angry. She loves him. He loves her. Let them alone. Meddlers are always muddlers.

PHYLLIS. You don't realize! He must be made to see he can't treat her as he'd not permit any man to treat one of his sisters. Father, don't tempt him to think we are not entitled to the respect his own people would demand. Don't tempt him to trifle.

MERIVALE. Julian's opinion of us is no more important than our opinion of him. Diana is what she is—*honest*. A woman out of ten thousand.

PHYLLIS. Indeed she is! That's why you—

MERIVALE. If he fails to appreciate his good fortune, the worse for him. Diana'd be well rid of him. Yes—I'll talk with him. I'll see just what there is in these suspicions of yours.

PHYLLIS. [*Agitated.*] Father! You mustn't take high ground with him. You must not! Don't let your false pride inflame his false pride. Remember, Diana's happiness or misery is at stake.

MERIVALE. Misery? Absurd!

PHYLLIS. I say, misery. You don't know how—[*hesitates—hurries on desperately*]—how utterly she has trusted him.

[PHYLLIS *stands breathless, fearing he has understood.*

MERIVALE. True. Diana never is half-hearted. With her it's always all or nothing.

[PHYLLIS *draws a long breath of relief.*

PHYLLIS. And you know how steadfast she is. If she lost him it'd break her heart.

MERIVALE. But if she got him, and he were unworthy, that too would break her heart—and blast her life, to boot. Hearts mend; but lives—not so easily.

PHYLLIS. He isn't unworthy—only careless, at most, I feel sure.

[*Hurries to veranda rail, glances to left.*

MERIVALE. [*Thoughtfully.*] Yes—yes. I'll speak to him.

PHYLLIS. I think I hear them. . . . Yes. . . . [*Going to* MERIVALE *and touching him affectionately.*] For *her* sake!

[*Exit* PHYLLIS *by window door, left.*

DAGMAR. [*On veranda, outside.*] You know the way. They're on the south veranda.

[*Enter* JULIAN BURROUGHS *by veranda, left. He is dressed in a fashionable traveling suit. He is obviously from an Eastern city, a well-bred youth, ardent and attractive. He stands an instant—hesitates.*

SCENE V.—MERIVALE—BURROUGHS.

MERIVALE. [*With cordiality, yet with reserve.*] Ah—welcome!

[*He advances with extended hand.* BURROUGHS, *confused, hesitating, shakes hands.*

BURROUGHS. Thank you, sir—thank you. I'm glad to see you so well.

MERIVALE. And you?

BURROUGHS. As always. [*With an effort.*] And glad to be here again.

MERIVALE. Diana will be in presently.

BURROUGHS. Ah—thank you—thanks.

MERIVALE. [*After a pause.*] And your father and mother?

BURROUGHS. [*Embarrassed.*] Father's abroad just now. Mother is—not very well—not ill, but—not very well.

MERIVALE. [*After an awkward pause, and speaking with nervous shyness.*] I've been rather expecting a —a—letter from her. [*With an attempt at a smile of raillery.*] You've told her of your—Western adventure?

BURROUGHS. [*Confused.*] The fact is—well—I—she—

[*Pauses.*

MERIVALE. [*With some sharpness.*] You have *not* told her?

BURROUGHS. Yes, sir, I have.

MERIVALE. Well, sir?

BURROUGHS. She's waiting until father returns.

MERIVALE. [*Stiffly, with a touch of haughtiness.*] I've no wish to interfere in what is Diana's business, but— Am I to understand that your mother is opposed to your marriage?

BURROUGHS. [*Embarrassed, but with engaging candor.*] The fact is, sir, my mother has had other ideas for me. You will appreciate how she might be reluctant to abandon them. She's not yet reconciled—hopes I'll change my mind. But—soon—I hope—I expect—

[*Pauses, painfully embarrassed.*

MERIVALE. [*Kindly, trying to put him at his ease.*] I understand. I knew there was some perfectly simple explanation.

BURROUGHS. You see, sir, mother is a woman of strong prejudices. One of them is Western people—just as one of yours is we of the East.

MERIVALE. [*Laughing.*] Yes. Yes. Exactly. . . . She has only to see Diana. [BURROUGHS *turns away nervously.* MERIVALE *lays his hand reassuringly on his shoulder.*] I'm sure of it. Don't let that trouble you.

BURROUGHS. Of course, if my father should oppose, it might delay . . . It might make a very considerable difference in my income. But—in a few years—

MERIVALE. [*Eagerly relieved.*] No more, Julian. My interest is Diana's happiness—and yours—and that depends on you and herself, not on parents or fortune. [BURROUGHS, *unnoted by* MERIVALE, *hangs his head.*] Your father and mother have only to meet her. They'll welcome her. I appreciate their point of view. [*Shakes hands with* BURROUGHS.] I trust I'm

broad enough for that. If I'd never seen the man my Diana was marrying, I'd feel precisely as they do. All is well—thank God! Where is Dagmar—Phyllis?

[MERIVALE *pauses as he sees* PHYLLIS *and* DR. WOODRUFF *entering by door to right.* PHYLLIS'S *eyes seek her father's face, but she is not fully reassured by his air of a man with a weight happily off his mind. She and* BURROUGHS *shake hands, he embarrassed, she frank and cordial.*

SCENE VI.—MERIVALE—BURROUGHS—PHYLLIS—WOODRUFF.

MERIVALE. Ben, this is the young man.

[WOODRUFF *advances to* BURROUGHS, *takes him by the hand, scrutinizes his face.*

WOODRUFF. I'm delighted to meet you, sir—delighted to meet you.

MERIVALE. [*In answer to an inquiring look from* BURROUGHS.] Dr. Woodruff.

BURROUGHS. I've often heard your name here.

WOODRUFF. Hubert and I celebrate next week the fiftieth anniversary of our friendship. A long time to keep on good terms with a quarrelsome old chap like him, eh?

MERIVALE. Come, now, Ben. Julian, I'll leave you here with Phyllis. [*Takes* WOODRUFF *by the arm and points with his cane out to the right.*] We'll go down

the terrace to the granaries yonder. I'll show you a harvest sight that'll do your heart good.

[*They go to the right along the veranda.*

WOODRUFF. Diana's magic?

MERIVALE. Diana's magic—at work.

[*Exeunt. Enter* DAGMAR *by window door, left.*

SCENE VII.—BURROUGHS—PHYLLIS—DAGMAR.

DAGMAR. A tall cold one, Burroughs?

BURROUGHS. No, thanks. Not just now.

DAGMAR. You're twenty minutes earlier than you were expected. That train was never on time before. Come on.

BURROUGHS. No, thanks. Later perhaps.

DAGMAR. They're ready and waiting.

PHYLLIS. Oh, you go and drink both, Lucius.

DAGMAR. I'll fill a drunkard's grave if I stay on here in the country. Always drinking alone, and always taking two, so as not to seem mean and unsociable.

[*Exit* DAGMAR, *left, into the house.*

SCENE VIII.—PHYLLIS—BURROUGHS.

PHYLLIS. That train deceived Diana. I'm afraid it'll be some time before she comes.

BURROUGHS. [*Embarrassed.*] I'm sorry. . . . I hope she'll not be long. . . . I've got to take the six o'clock express for the East.

PHYLLIS. [*Startling, then recovering her composure and speaking in a tone of polite regret.*] Six o'clock! . . . A great journey for such a little stop.

BURROUGHS. You see, I'm arranging to go abroad.

PHYLLIS. When do you sail?

BURROUGHS. Next week—Wednesday.

PHYLLIS. So soon!

BURROUGHS. And I fear I'll be on the other side—longer than I had thought—perhaps until spring—possibly a year—though I hope not.

PHYLLIS. [*Constrainedly, almost absently.*] That'll be lonely.

BURROUGHS. [*With some awkwardness.*] Oh, I dare say Diana will pull through all right. She has her work.

PHYLLIS. I wasn't thinking of Diana. I was thinking of you—away off there in strange lands alone.

BURROUGHS. There's always a lot of people one knows in London and Paris. I've several relatives married there. Then . . . mother's going with me. The doctor has prescribed a winter on the Riviera for her.

PHYLLIS. Oh! . . . Yes, of course. . . . That *will* be gay! Nice! Monte Carlo!

BURROUGHS. [*Confused and apologetic.*] I shan't be enjoying myself all the time. I'm going on business, too.

PHYLLIS. The business of amusing your mother?

BURROUGHS. That's the pleasure. We've always

been chums. She looks like a sister rather than my mother, and she's great fun, when she's with those she likes and doesn't feel distant with—or—that is—[*He becomes greatly embarrassed and* PHYLLIS *does not help him, but aggravates his discomfort by placidly eyeing him.*] . . . You and mother would like each other, I'm sure.

PHYLLIS. Yes? It's rather dangerous to predict what two women will think of each other.

BURROUGHS. [*Depressed.*] That's true, isn't it? I do hope she'll like Diana.

PHYLLIS. [*Dryly.*] It's important, too—I should say—whether Di will like her.

BURROUGHS. [*Confused.*] Of course — certainly. [*A constrained silence, then he, with a nervous attempt to make light conversation.*] I hope you'll do what you can to prevent Diana from forgetting me while I'm away.

PHYLLIS. I'll do my best. But you know Di—how busy she is. When one is busy, there's little time for anything except what absolutely forces itself on one's attention. She and father'll be going South this winter.

BURROUGHS. She works entirely too hard. A rest will be just the thing for her.

PHYLLIS. A change, rather than a rest. They'll go to Palm Beach. It's lively there, and she's been leading too secluded a life. Lucius and I are taking a house in Washington, and we'll have her visit us for

February and March. She'll enjoy it, once she gets in the swing. I don't know any place so fascinating as Washington in the season. And what a hit Di will make!

BURROUGHS. [*Jealously.*] I hope so.

PHYLLIS. [*Sweetly.*] Lucius's aunt, Mrs. Throckmorton, has a big house there, and she'll give her the right sort of background.

BURROUGHS. [*Somewhat sourly.*] That'll be nice. . . . [*With an awkward laugh.*] I see there's small danger of my being missed.

PHYLLIS. You can't expect a girl like Di to play Mariana of the Moated Grange, and mix her fancies with the sallow rifted glooms, and moan, "He cometh not! He cometh not!"

BURROUGHS. [*Gruffly.*] Hardly. . . . [*Paces up and down restlessly.*] . . . Where is she?

PHYLLIS. [*With some embarrassment.*] She—she went to the Creek farm.

BURROUGHS. I think I'll go to meet her.

PHYLLIS. You can't miss her. There's only the one road.

BURROUGHS. I'll walk that way.

PHYLLIS. Yes. Your time here is so short. You'll meet her, no doubt, before you've gone far.

[*Exit* BURROUGHS *by veranda, left,* PHYLLIS *nodding and smiling friendlily at him. The instant he disappears, her face, her manner change to deep agitation.*

PHYLLIS. Going for a year! A year!

[*Enter* DIANA *by door to left. She is dressed beautifully in a walking costume, with a very short skirt which makes her look extremely girlish, and is most becoming to her figure, which is graceful, alluring, free in line and in movement.*

SCENE IX.—PHYLLIS—DIANA.

DIANA. Where's Julian?

PHYLLIS. [*Startled.*] Ah! . . .

DIANA. Lucius said he was here with you. Why didn't you tell me he'd come?

PHYLLIS. I sent him away because I must speak with you first. Di—he's—

DIANA. Interfering in my affairs! Phyllis—

PHYLLIS. Di, he's come to break his engagement!

DIANA. Oh, Phyl!

[*Laughs.*

PHYLLIS. I tell you he has. Of course, he's too thoroughly the man of honor to admit it to himself. But it's the truth. He and his mother are going abroad next week, to be gone a year—

DIANA. [*Sharply.*] A year!

PHYLLIS. Yes—a year. She's made him promise to see whether a year's separation won't change him.

DIANA. [*Dazedly.*] A year. Promised his mother—

PHYLLIS. And of course it will—with her artfully

poisoning him against you—you four thousand miles away.

DIANA. [*Dazedly.*] A year. [*Sharply to* PHYLLIS.] How do you know?

PHYLLIS. He told me himself. Here. Just now.

[DIANA *turns away. A pause.*

DIANA. [*Hoarsely.*] A year. . . . A promise. . . . When I telegraphed for him—

[*She pauses, reflecting, oblivious of her sister.*

PHYLLIS. [*Staring in amazement.*] *You* telegraphed for *him*. . . . Then he didn't come of his own . . . Di! . . . You sent for him! . . . Disgrace! Disgrace! Disgrace! . . . [*Brokenly.*] Oh—Diana! Diana! . . . [*In a low, horrified voice.*] If he should refuse to marry you!

DIANA. [*Half absently.*] Don't say those things, Phyl! . . . [*Absorbed again.*] What shall I do?

PHYLLIS. But *if*!—*if*! Oh, my God!

DIANA. [*Calmly.*] There is no if.

PHYLLIS. [*Distracted.*] He's surely a man of honor. He simply can't squirm out of it. When you tell him, he'll *have* to marry you.

DIANA. [*Strongly.*] I'll not tell him. He shall feel free. I'll not seem to be compelling him.

PHYLLIS. Mad! Mad! . . . But this is only talk. It can't be that you don't realize your position. When you see him—

DIANA. When I see him, I'll see a love like my own.

PHYLLIS. Love! Love! Let's hear no more about love till you've got a husband.

DIANA. And I'd hear nothing about a husband till I was *sure—sure*—about love.

PHYLLIS. [*Wildly.*] I tell you, Diana, Julian Burroughs has no intention of marrying you.

DIANA. You insult him!—you insult me!

PHYLLIS. Sh—father!

[*Enter* MERIVALE *on veranda, left.*

SCENE X.—PHYLLIS—DIANA—MERIVALE.

MERIVALE. Is Julian there? I don't see him.

PHYLLIS. He'll be here in a moment, father.

MERIVALE. The sun got too hot for me. When Ben comes, tell him I'm in my study.

PHYLLIS. Very well, father.

MERIVALE. My eyes aren't what they once were. But I think I see how happy you are. Ah—youth—youth and love. It makes me feel old. But—happy—yes indeed, happy. I'm not altogether selfish—not altogether.

[*Exit* MERIVALE *into the house, left.*

SCENE XI.—PHYLLIS—DIANA.

PHYLLIS. [*Softly, solemnly.*] Suppose you should be wrong about Julian—what of father? . . . He'd not reproach you. . . . He'd cover his wound, smile—die.

[DIANA *wavers, recovers herself.*

DIANA. [*Strongly.*] He'd understand. It was he

who taught me that self-respect is honor, lies shame. . . . Why, what are we talking about? You shan't tempt me into the disloyalty of doubt. I know Julian loves me as I love him. I know it!

BURROUGHS. [*Outside, on veranda.*] I went as far as Cresson Hill.

[DIANA *lifts her head exultantly, clasps her hands.* PHYLLIS *hastily exit, into house.*

BURROUGHS. [*Outside.*] Oh—

[*Enter* BURROUGHS. *He stands uncertainly an instant, distinctly shows embarrassment. As he gazes at her lithe figure and face aglow, his passion surges.*

SCENE XII.—DIANA—BURROUGHS.

BURROUGHS. Diana! [*He extends his arms, rushes toward her, then with his hands upon her arms at the shoulders, pauses, and his eyes devour her face.*] Diana!

[*Kisses her passionately. Her arms encircle his neck, and they cling together in a long embrace.*

DIANA. My *dear* love!

[BURROUGHS *holds her at arm's length, gazes into her face.*

BURROUGHS. Your touch—[*kisses her passionately*] —it's like life in the glorious dawn of the world. [*Strains her in his arms.*] As soon as I got the first

glimpse of this place, it all began to come back to me. And when I saw you— [*Gazes at her fervently.*] *You!*—it was as if love were racing through me with a torch, setting me on fire in every vein. [*Embraces her tightly.*] Cheek to cheek—breast to breast!

DIANA. Heart to heart! Oh, it has been so long—so long! But I've not been unhappy. I could always feel your love—strong—true!

BURROUGHS. [*Clasping her again.*] I do love you! [*Half to himself.*] I do! I could not—could not give you up.

[DIANA *slowly half releases herself, looks up at him laughingly.*

DIANA. Give me up. Give up your wife! How absurd it sounds! As if *we* could be separated! [*Kisses him. Gazes at him again, notes his confused, nervous expression.*]—Ah!

BURROUGHS. [*Stammeringly.*] What is it, Di? [*Tries to draw her close to him again, but she gently resists.*] . . . Don't look at me like that. . . . I didn't mean . . . that is—

DIANA. [*Drawing back slowly, wonderingly.*] Why do your eyes no longer meet mine? . . . Tell me, Julian! . . . Oh, Julian, be frank—be frank!

BURROUGHS. It's nothing.

DIANA. Your mother—is it your mother?

BURROUGHS. I ought to have warned you. But, I didn't realize it myself—how she'd feel about—about my marrying.

DIANA. How do *you* feel about it?

BURROUGHS. Now that I see you again—feel your magic fingers—how my blood thrills!

DIANA. [*Sadly.*] Is that *all*?

BURROUGHS. All?

DIANA. What did you think when I was *not* with you?

BURROUGHS. [*Evasively.*] I don't understand.

DIANA. [*Sadly.*] Ah, yes—Julian. You understand.

BURROUGHS. My mother shall not come between us!

DIANA. She told you it was mere physical attraction? Was she right? If she was, be brave enough to say so, Julian. When you were clear of the spell over your sense, did you find you didn't care?—not as you believed?

BURROUGHS. Diana, I swear—

DIANA. You've the right to change your mind. You've not the right to hide it from me.

BURROUGHS. Why should you think I changed?

DIANA. In all your letters, you said not one word about your mother's opposition.

BURROUGHS. I admit, that was not frank. But I didn't know what to do. Be just, Di. I love my mother. [*He takes her hand.*] We've always been the best friends in the world, as I've told you. You know you'd be the first to denounce me as a heartless cad if I showed no respect for her feelings. [DIANA *nods slowly.*] Put yourself in my place. I was in a

frightful position—between my duty to her and my duty to you. [DIANA *draws her hand away.*

BURROUGHS. You'll understand, when you see her, why I speak as I do. There's a certain pride—a—a majesty— We've all been brought up to stand in awe of her—

DIANA. [*Coldly.*] The picture is not attractive.

BURROUGHS. [*Desperately.*] At any rate, she has promised that, as soon as we return, she'll withdraw her opposition, if— [*Checks himself.*

DIANA. Go on!

BURROUGHS. That's all. What's the matter, Diana? You're not yourself.

DIANA. You were about to say she'd withdraw her opposition if you still wish to marry me.

BURROUGHS. [*Eagerly.*] I shall not change!

DIANA. And I? [BURROUGHS *lowers his eyes.*

DIANA. And I?

BURROUGHS. You *will* not understand me. You twist everything I say.

DIANA. You don't ask *me* to swear I'll not change. [*Laughs satirically.*] You feel I'm yours—to take or to cast aside, as you choose—as you shall choose, a year from now.

BURROUGHS. Diana, don't put it that way!

DIANA. It does look ugly—doesn't it—the naked truth?

BURROUGHS. [*Pleadingly.*] I didn't mean that.

DIANA. You mean, you didn't realize how your thoughts would sound until you spoke them. [*Laughs again; then with sudden anger.*] How dare you! How dare you think of me as a poor creature, at your mercy!

BURROUGHS. It isn't true. I never thought *that—never!*

DIANA. [*Facing him, suddenly.*] Then what did you think?

[*His eyes sink before hers. A long pause.*

BURROUGHS. I admit in a way and for a moment I may have faltered—

[*He pauses.*

DIANA. [*Mournfully.*] In love—such love as ours professed to be—to falter is to fail.

[*She turns from him.*

BURROUGHS. You wrong me, Diana. I admit I've been moved by my mother—more than I should. You can't understand—you who've always lived in this atmosphere of freedom—I was at home—and the home influence was strong about me. [DIANA *listens sympathetically.*] I did let my mother say more than I should. I did consent to wait. But, Di, I never wavered in my obligation to you.

DIANA. Obligation! [*Laughs wildly.*] Obligation! That word on the lips of a lover! . . . Obligation—duty—must . . . [*Her voice breaks.*] Oh, Julian, we've traveled far from love, you and I—haven't we?

BURROUGHS. [*Passionately seizing her.*] No! No!

My words were unfortunate. And I've done things I ought not. But *now—now*—with you before my eyes —with my arms about you—I love you—love you as I always have.

[*Tries to kiss her.*

DIANA. [*Withholding her lips.*] You love me? [*Wistfully.*] You mean that?

BURROUGHS. I mean that. I—love—you. [*Embraces her sensuously.*] I love you. Diana! Diana!

[*A long kiss; a close embrace.*

DIANA. [*Releasing herself a little.*] *Now*, I can tell you. [*Kisses him, laughs softly.*] I didn't really doubt you—I couldn't. Only— When one loves, every little thing makes one tremble.

BURROUGHS. Dearest! . . . I *can't* go away so soon! I shan't go to-day.

DIANA. How would you like to take me with you?

BURROUGHS. [*Tenderly.*] Diana!

[*Kisses her.*

DIANA. [*Softly, shyly.*] Do you know why I telegraphed? I sent for you to marry me at once.

BURROUGHS. [*Releasing her, smiling uneasily.*] Marry? At once? [*Takes his arms away.*] I don't see how I can. [*Turns from her a little.*] My people—[*with a quick, nervous laugh*]—and yours, too, of course—they'd think it strange—wouldn't they? [*Looks at her, is fascinated by her expression.*] Di! . . . [*Low, intense.*] You telegraphed because— [*Falls back a step.*] This is—terrible! [*Faces her.*]

Terrible! . . . [*Sees her expression of utter, dazed despair, pityingly.*] Poor girl! [*Advances toward her.*] Poor Di!

[*Tries to take her in his arms.*

DIANA. Don't—touch—me.

[BURROUGHS *starts back, hangs his head. A pause.*

BURROUGHS. [*Shamefacedly.*] Forget what I said. I—I didn't mean it.

DIANA. Quite unnecessary.

BURROUGHS. What do you mean, Diana?

DIANA. The hypocrisy. Unnecessary. Most offensive.

BURROUGHS. [*With dignity.*] Surely you can't doubt my honor—that I'm willing to make reparation?

DIANA. Reparation! Reparation! . . . But I deserve it. Reparation! . . . [*To herself.*] I can't believe it! It's a dream!

BURROUGHS. What can I say to—

DIANA. Say? Nothing! . . . Look at me! . . . Do you love—*love* me?

BURROUGHS. I do—but—

DIANA. [*Wildly.*] Passion! Only a passionate impulse. . . . It's a horrible dream—only a dream!

BURROUGHS. By all we've been to each other, I swear—

DIANA. "By all we've been to each other." And what was that? What was in your heart? Leave me!

Go! I can't bear it. . . . I can't realize it—I can't! I believed utterly—not a doubt! . . . Go! Go!

BURROUGHS. I'll not go. I must marry you. I'll see your father, say—

DIANA. *I? I—marry* a man whose heart is shrinking from me? *I?*

BURROUGHS. We must!

DIANA. [*Beside herself.*] Must! With love and trust dead—[*despairingly*]—dead! . . . [*Passionately.*] No!

BURROUGHS. [*Angrily.*] Yes — must. . . . You — *forget*!

[*A pause.* DIANA *stares at him, looks round wildly, sinks into a chair, gazes straight before her.*

DIANA. [*Breathlessly.*] Must! Must!

[BURROUGHS *watches her uneasily, then exit by window door, left, into house.*

DIANA. I—must!

CURTAIN.

ACT III

Same as Act I.—The Library. At the table near the center MAGGIE *is arranging white flowers in vases;* BILLY *is carrying a large palm through the room.*

SCENE I.—MAGGIE—BILLY.

MAGGIE. [*Surveying the vase she has just filled.*] I'm afraid that looks stiff.

BILLY. [*Setting down the palm.*] What's the difference? There ain't going to be no outsiders in. Who'll notice?

MAGGIE. It ain't who'll notice; it's the inward satisfaction!

BILLY [*Contemptuously.*] In'ard satisfaction!

MAGGIE. That sniff explains why you'll always stay just a man-of-all-work.

BILLY. Be that as it may, I could 'a' had *you* for the asking.

MAGGIE. Not since the law allowed of my marrying. You'll have to court close to the cradle if you ever get a wife. A grown woman wants a somebody with something.

BILLY. Meaning a Peter? [*Laughs.*] Peter's a wonder, he is! . . . Dobbin—steady old Dobbin.

MAGGIE. Miss Diana has promised that from now on he's to share in the profits.

BILLY. [*Whistling.*] So that's it! I seen your airs before I seen you. Well, Peter's gettin' his pay for his bootlickin'.

MAGGIE. For his work, and you know it.

BILLY. [*After glancing round cautiously.*] Ain't it queer about this here wedding? I don't understand it, nohow.

MAGGIE. Of course you don't. As soon as anything happens out of the ordinary, you're all suspicion. Mr. Burroughs has to go to Europe on business. He wants to take her with him.

BILLY. But *is* she going—that's what I want to know. Is *she* going? Why hasn't she had the trunks up, to pack 'em?

MAGGIE. [*Lamely.*] It—it—ain't decided—yet.

BILLY. You don't know nothing about it!

MAGGIE. I mind my own business—and plenty to do it gives me.

BILLY. She looks strange. She acts strange.

MAGGIE. You think the whole world's rotten.

BILLY. [*Injured.*] Who said rotten? [*Excitedly.*] Do you think it's as bad as that?

MAGGIE. Now, did anybody *ever*! Trying to make me out as low as you are.

BILLY. Well, humans is humans, the high as human as the low—that's *my* experience. The high's got high names for it, and the low low, but there it

is, just the same. All flesh is dust—and what's dust but dirt?

MAGGIE. Shame on you! Why are you hanging round here? Why ain't you attending to Mr. Julian?

BILLY. I did. I had to speak twice before he answered, and then he cut me off like a snapping turtle.

MAGGIE. I'd think you'd 'a' got used to being treated that way, and wouldn't notice it.

BILLY. [*Tauntingly.*] No, thank you! Peter's quite welcome—quite!

[*Enter* WOODRUFF *from the right.* BILLY *takes up the palm and exit by double doors, to the left, with a wag of the head and a wink at* MAGGIE *that infuriates her.*

SCENE II.—MAGGIE—WOODRUFF.

MAGGIE. [*Noting his depressed air.*] We shall miss her dreadful, doctor. If I gave way, I'd not be able to do anything for crying.

WOODRUFF. My friend Merivale is dazed—dazed. He's at his desk, staring at his books, seeing nothing, hearing nothing.

MAGGIE. What'll he be like when she's really gone, when he—we all—really miss her? It ain't the death or the separation so much—not right at the moment. It's the emptiness afterwards.

WOODRUFF. The emptiness afterwards. My wife—you remember her, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Yes, sir—yes, indeed.

WOODRUFF. It was more than a month after—after God took her, when the real heartache began. And it's never left me . . . . and never shall . . . until I see her again.

[*Enter* PHYLLIS *from left. She is in fashionable afternoon dress. Her air is excited and gay.*

SCENE III.—MAGGIE—WOODRUFF—PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS. Why, doctor! One'd think you were about to conduct a funeral. And you, too, Maggie. This won't do! Doctor, go cheer up father. Maggie, bring me more flowers—help Billy with them.

[*Exit* MAGGIE *by veranda, left.* PHYLLIS *inspects the vases on the table.*

WOODRUFF. It's true, we're not losing Diana but gaining Julian.

PHYLLIS. That's the way to look at it! [*As* WOODRUFF *turns to leave.*] First, go into the parlor and see what you think of things— And the hall and dining room, too.

WOODRUFF. Delighted!

[*Exit* WOODRUFF *by double doors.* PHYLLIS, *humming, busies herself rearranging flowers in the vases. Enter* DAGMAR *from right, smoking cigarette and moving leisurely, as usual.*

SCENE IV.—PHYLLIS—DAGMAR.

PHYLLIS. Oh, I thought it was Billy. But he couldn't be back yet. I sent him for more flowers. These ridiculous country bouquets of Maggie's! But she did her best.

DAGMAR. Why the rush? You'll give yourself prickly heat. Take it easy. You've more than an hour before the wedding, and only the one room left to fix up. [*Stands at parlor door.*] Why, it's practically ready. Very smart. Very smart.

PHYLLIS. I thought you were looking after Julian.

DAGMAR. He endured me half an hour, then said flatly that he preferred to be alone. Of course marriage is a joke—a joke on the man. But Julian ought to buck up—be a sport—have a sense of humor.

PHYLLIS. [*Pausing abruptly, and gazing at* DAGMAR.] Where is he?

DAGMAR. Calm yourself. He hasn't fled.

PHYLLIS. [*Resuming her work.*] Don't be an idiot.

DAGMAR. He's terribly restless. He'll wear himself out before the party begins. I understand, though. I was in a frightful stew on our wedding day, myself.

PHYLLIS. Really!

DAGMAR. But then, I had more excuse than he has. Our day was fixed months beforehand. That's bad business. His way's the best. All the difference

between dating a dentist months ahead and just popping in off the street to have it out. Yes, Burroughs is wise. . . . I don't wonder he's nervous. If we men weren't such cowards, the first strains of the wedding march'd be the signal for the flight of many a bridegroom.

PHYLLIS. I see no fun in cheap comic-paper humor about marriage.

DAGMAR. Humor? I was philosophizing. Julian's face set me thinking. It's a true wedding face. You know, nobody but the bride's father and mother ever looks cheerful at a wedding. [*Seriously.*] But—Julian's face is unusually—

[*Hesitates.*

PHYLLIS. Unusually what?

DAGMAR. Joking aside, Phyl, there's *sure* something queer about this wedding—now, isn't there? [PHYLLIS *ignores him.*] If the man I drove over from the station—the man with no change suit—if he was on his way to marry—I'll eat my hand. Ain't I right?

PHYLLIS. [*With cheerful sarcasm.*] We've lived together two years, and you haven't yet learned that I—never—answer—questions.

DAGMAR. Oh, yes, I have, but I like to ask questions. Besides, I'm hopeful. . . . Of course, I know he's in love with her— [*Walks up and down smoking.* PHYLLIS *hums gayly.*] You *are* in a good humor!

PHYLLIS. Rather. *Rather.* A great weight off my mind—getting Di married safely—

DAGMAR. And so well.

PHYLLIS. And so well. A young sister—impulsive—with noble, silly notions about the equality of men and women—with a belief everyone's as honest and high-minded as herself— What a dangerous character to be at large!

DAGMAR. Appalling!

[*Enter* MAGGIE *with apron full of flowers.*

PHYLLIS. [*To* MAGGIE.] I find I've enough after all, Maggie. Take them into the parlor and put them with those already banked on the mantel.

MAGGIE. Yes, Miss Phyllis.

[*Exit* MAGGIE.

PHYLLIS. [*To* DAGMAR.] Carry in these vases. I've got to go up and look Diana over and smooth myself out a bit. You know you and father aren't to change, as Julian has only his traveling suit. And see that Maggie doesn't ruin the mantel. She's so heavy handed—so countrified. . . . No, I'd better go myself.

[*As she is about to exit with a vase, enter* WOODRUFF, *almost bumping into her. He is beaming and rubbing his hands.*

SCENE V.—PHYLLIS—DAGMAR—WOODRUFF.

WOODRUFF. Pardon—I beg your pardon! . . . The parlor and hall are exquisite. And the dining room, too.

PHYLLIS. Aren't they! And we'd really no time at all.

[*Exit* PHYLLIS *with vase.*

DAGMAR. You'll excuse us, doctor?

WOODRUFF. Don't mind me. I'm one of the family.

[*Exit* DAGMAR *with vase, whistling the wedding march as he goes. Enter* MAGGIE *presently, to take up the remaining vase from the table.*

SCENE VI.—WOODRUFF—MAGGIE.

WOODRUFF. These delicious flowers! The Lord is indeed good to give them to us.

MAGGIE. [*Indignantly.*] Oh, my, these didn't grow wild, sir. Miss Diana, she developed them. No, indeed—they're anything but wild.

[WOODRUFF *looks disconcerted, starts to explain, shrugs and smiles. In lifting the vase* MAGGIE *drops several flowers, sets it down to pick them up. Enter* BURROUGHS *from veranda, right. He is somber, restless.*

SCENE VII.—WOODRUFF—MAGGIE—BURROUGHS.

BURROUGHS. I'm looking for Mrs. Dagmar. I thought I'd find her here.

MAGGIE. She *was* in the parlor. But I reckon she's gone up by now. Shall I send her?

BURROUGHS. No—no, thanks. It was nothing.

MAGGIE. You haven't given us much time, Mr. Julian.

WOODRUFF. But time enough, after all. When everything's ready for the voyage, why fuss and dawdle over the mere embarking?

BURROUGHS. Why, indeed.

[*Enter* BILLY *by door to left, front.*

SCENE VIII.—BURROUGHS—WOODRUFF—MAGGIE—BILLY.

WOODRUFF. It's a pity your parents couldn't be here.

BURROUGHS. [*Curtly.*] It was impossible. [*Somewhat less abruptly.*] Father's in Europe, and mother not well enough to travel.

[MAGGIE *glances at* BILLY *with a nod and smile of triumph.* BURROUGHS *is moving restlessly about.*

WOODRUFF. I'm sorry to hear that. Nothing serious, I trust?

BURROUGHS. No—oh, no.

WOODRUFF. I'm sure the sight of your bride will cure her.

BURROUGHS. [*Awkwardly.*] Thank you.

BILLY. [*To* WOODRUFF.] Mr. Merivale'd like to see you, if you can come.

WOODRUFF. Certainly. You'll excuse me?

BURROUGHS. I'll wait for Mrs. Dagmar.

[*Exit* WOODRUFF *by door to left, front,* BILLY *following.* BURROUGHS *strolls uneasily about the room.*

SCENE IX.—BURROUGHS—MAGGIE.

MAGGIE. I'll go tell her.

BURROUGHS. No—not the least hurry. Don't let me interrupt your work.

MAGGIE. I've just finished. How do you like the looks of the room?

BURROUGHS. [*Absently.*] Charming—charming.

[*Enter* PHYLLIS *by the door left, front.*

SCENE X.—MAGGIE—PHYLLIS—BURROUGHS.

PHYLLIS. How quickly you've worked—and how well!

MAGGIE. I'm glad you're pleased.

PHYLLIS. You'd better go up to Miss Diana and see if she wants anything. [*Glances at the clock.*] Still nearly an hour before the wedding.

MAGGIE. So it is. Who'd a thought it? Its surprising how much a body can do when they've no time.

[MAGGIE *takes the vase and moves toward parlor doors.* PHYLLIS *watches* BURROUGHS *uneasily. As* MAGGIE *reaches the door, enter* MERIVALE *and* WOODRUFF. *She stands aside for them to pass, then exit.*

SCENE XI.—PHYLLIS—BURROUGHS—WOODRUFF—MERIVALE.

MERIVALE. [*Gravely, to* BURROUGHS.] I was in search of you.

[BURROUGHS *looks disconcerted,* PHYLLIS *uneasy.*

BURROUGHS. Of me, sir?

[WOODRUFF *and* PHYLLIS *go to the veranda, talk at extreme left rear of scene, she watchful of her father and* BURROUGHS.

MERIVALE. A moment ago—only a moment ago—I suddenly remembered our conversation about the opposition of your parents.

BURROUGHS. [*Showing great relief.*] I hope I did not give you the impression, sir, that their opposition was—serious?

MERIVALE. No—oh, no. But— When you came to me a while ago—told me you wished to take her now, I—I—I thought only of my own distress, over giving her up so soon. [MERIVALE *with an effort steadies himself.*] But now— Have you told *her* about your parents?

BURROUGHS. [*With constraint.*] She understands the situation.

MERIVALE. [*Hesitatingly.*] I suppose, then, I've no right to interfere. It has always been my idea that the most that can be wisely done by parents for children is to train them to be fearless and truthful. The

rest will take care of itself. They may—and—will—make mistakes, but they will certainly come out right, where children who have been guarded and sheltered from experience never learn to control themselves.

BURROUGHS. I assure you, sir, my parents would entirely approve, were they here to be consulted.

MERIVALE. You are sure of this? Your own eagerness is not misleading you?

BURROUGHS. I am sure my eagerness is not misleading me.

MERIVALE. [*After a brief pause, turning suddenly and appealingly to* BURROUGHS.] Love her, Julian! Her nature is a vein of gold—the deeper, the richer. *Love* her.

[BURROUGHS *lowers his eyes, then his head. His lips move, but he is inaudible.* MERIVALE *lays one hand affectionately on his shoulder for an instant.*

MERIVALE. Love! Youth! [*Sighs, with an effort at cheerfulness.*] I am selfish—selfish. [*Approaches* WOODRUFF *and* PHYLLIS. *To* WOODRUFF.] You and Phyllis will take care of my son, here. And Phyllis, will you send Diana to me?

PHYLLIS. She is very busy.

MERIVALE. But not too busy to give her father a few minutes alone before the wedding.

PHYLLIS. Very well, father.

[*Exit* WOODRUFF, BURROUGHS, *and* PHYLLIS *by veranda, to left.* MERIVALE *sits on the*

sofa to left, reflecting. He rises, takes a framed photograph of DIANA *from the top of the cabinet to right, gazes long at it, kisses it. He returns it to its place, reseats himself on the sofa to the left with a heavy sigh. Enter* DIANA *from the right, in a white embroidered batiste that reveals her throat. She is very pale. She halts at the threshold.*

SCENE XII.—MERIVALE—DIANA.

MERIVALE. Diana—my daughter.

[DIANA *crosses to him, seats herself upon his knee, looks into his face. He strokes her hair and kisses her brow.*

MERIVALE. Diana, are you *sure* you love Julian?

DIANA. Yes, father. I—love—him.

MERIVALE. Are you *sure* he loves you?

[DIANA *lowers her eyes, evades an answer by pressing her head against his.*

MERIVALE. You have always been good—what I call good—truthful, honest, unafraid, splendidly willful.

DIANA. [*Absently.*] Willful—willful!

MERIVALE. Thank God, I never had a docile child. As the great American poet said, "Resist much, obey little." I've tried to teach you that no one is up to the full human stature who isn't master, and sole master, within himself.

DIANA. I thank you for having taught me that. That's why I'm able to look at you and say: "Father, I've made mistakes—grave mistakes—one that has cost me dear—dear! But never anything you'd frown on me for, if you knew *all* about it."

MERIVALE. One that has cost you dear?

DIANA. One that has cost me dear. [*As he begins to speak, lays her fingers on his lips.*] But you've taught me to act for myself, to learn from my mistakes, and to bear consequences without shirking—and in silence.

MERIVALE. Can't I help you?

DIANA. Not this time—thanks, daddy. [*Cheerfully.*] I'll come out all right.

MERIVALE. Indeed you will. And your happiness is secure, with Julian.

[DIANA'S *face clouds and she turns away to hide it from him.*

DIANA. I shall make my own life, as you have taught me.

MERIVALE. Thanks to the great and good God whom creeds caricature, I've a daughter fit to be the wife of a *man*, the mother of children!

DIANA. I shall make many, many mistakes, father, but— [*She lifts her eyes to his.*] I'll do nothing of which I shall be ashamed.

MERIVALE. And from you that means, nothing of which your father would be less than proud.

DIANA. [*Suddenly clinging to him.*] I want to be-

lieve so, father. [*She embraces him.*] I feel I could count on you, no matter what might come. How strong that makes me!

MERIVALE. What is it, child? Why do you speak so sadly?

DIANA. Not sadly. No—not sadly—only earnestly.

MERIVALE. I see the years—long, yet short, stretching away before you—years of sun and storm, but after every storm, the sun; beyond every shadow, the sun; and you strong and fearless, beside your husband, with your children about you—children like yourself.

DIANA. [*Painfully moved.*] Father!

MERIVALE. You are founding your life solidly upon love and truth. Love and truth!

[DIANA *draws away sharply, gazes into the distance.*

DIANA. [*Slowly and in a strange voice.*] Love and truth— Love—and—truth. [*Looks at him gravely.*] That is the *only* foundation?

MERIVALE. There is no other. Against it, storms rage in vain. Without it, the fairest house tumbles to ruin.

[DIANA *rises, walks slowly up and down, her head bent, her hands clasped tightly behind her.*

DIANA. Love—and—truth.

[*Enter from the left* WOODRUFF. *She pauses, gazes at him. He returns her look with a fatherly smile.*

SCENE XIII.—DIANA—MERIVALE—WOODRUFF.

WOODRUFF. Mrs. Dagmar—Phyllis—sent me to—

[*Pauses.*

MERIVALE. You're not interrupting, Ben.

DIANA. [*Aside.*] Love—and—truth. [*To* MERIVALE.] Daddy, leave me with Uncle Ben.

[MERIVALE, *still preoccupied, rises, kisses her, looks long into her face, kisses her again.*

MERIVALE. A wedding is very solemn, Ben—far more solemn than a funeral. Death is a conclusion, a finality, while marriage is a beginning, full of possibilities and perplexities. [*Releases* DIANA *lingeringly.*] Thank God, our girl here sets sail in a stout ship. I am selfish—selfish.

[*Exit* MERIVALE *to the left.*

SCENE XIV.—DIANA—WOODRUFF.

WOODRUFF. Well, little girl, what is it?

DIANA. [*Earnestly studying his face.*] Yes, I can trust you.

WOODRUFF. I have loved you very especially, child, since you were a baby in long dresses, in the arms of your dear mother. . . . I see in your eyes that you are greatly troubled.

DIANA. Uncle Ben, suppose I knew Julian does not love me as he should—does not respect me as a man must respect his *wife*—

WOODRUFF. Does not respect you! Why, child—why, Diana—that's impossible.

DIANA. It is true.

WOODRUFF. You are deluding yourself. The excitement—the strain—

DIANA. He does not respect me because I have been to him what he thinks of as his—his mistress.

WOODRUFF. [*Springing to his feet.*] Diana!

DIANA. You see how it affects you. Well—that's the way he feels.

WOODRUFF. [*Sitting and taking her hand.*] My poor, poor Diana.

DIANA. [*With bitterness.*] Precisely! Just what *he* thinks—pity and contempt.

WOODRUFF. No! No! I'll not believe it.

DIANA. Believe or not, as you please. It is true. And, since it is so—since he does look down on me—since he would not marry me, had he choice—ought I to marry him?

WOODRUFF. He must realize that, if you did such a thing, it was in a moment of passing weakness—an impulse you were not responsible for. He must realize that he is to blame.

DIANA. But that is not true. It never is. Women plead it, and men, liking to think woman the weaker vessel, believe them. But it isn't so. [*Impatiently.*] Let's not discuss that. What I wish to know is, ought I to marry him? Would it be right?

WOODRUFF. Why not? He has— [*Rises, paces up*

and down.] . . . Who'd have believed it of him? He looks an honorable man.

DIANA. And so he is. A dishonorable man would have twisted his conscience to his inclination. He's quite willing to "make reparation"—I believe that's the classical term. It's the term he used. Oh, his attitude is correct, I assure you. He looks down on me, and that is most manlike, most conventional. He is willing to marry me, and that is most honorable.

WOODRUFF. [*Bursting out again.*] To insinuate himself into this beautiful, this ideal home, to poison—

DIANA. Don't, please! You know better. [*Faces him.*] Am *I* the woman a man could entrap?

WOODRUFF. You tell me he has.

DIANA. I did not say that. Uncle Ben, you've lived many years. You've dealt with human nature in the confessional. You know that in these cases the woman is the stronger. It's the woman who gives the man the courage to dare—or he does not dare.

WOODRUFF. Women are led by their emotions. *You* were.

DIANA. And what are men led by? But let's talk of what now is. I don't blame him—at least I try not to. I put him to too severe a test.

WOODRUFF. You did, indeed, Diana.

DIANA. He's been fighting against being influenced by his education—by his surroundings, by what all his world feels and says. But in spite of himself he *is* influenced.

WOODRUFF. Naturally—naturally.

DIANA. And when his mother was pleading with him to give me up, I know now it was this that was her secret ally, that made him falter—and doubt himself—and doubt me. But the fact remains that he feels toward me as—as you'd feel toward a woman who had done what I have done. He feels [*with sad bitterness*] that he has got all I have to give—what you men always think. How contemptible women are in your eyes!

WOODRUFF. Contemptible?

DIANA. [*After a pause.*] Yes, contemptible. [*A pause, then slowly.*] What a man values in himself at less than nothing is in a woman *all* her worth.

[*Silence.*

WOODRUFF. God seems to have so ordained it.

DIANA. [*Springing up, rushing toward the windows.*] Not the God beyond these free skies! Not *my* God!

[*Silence.*

WOODRUFF. At least, this man isn't utterly depraved. He's not casting you off, as his sort usually do cast off their victims.

DIANA. Victims! I, a victim! Oh, Uncle Ben, why do you repeat these cant phrases? I am no victim. I stand here in strength, not in weakness. Victim! What a world! The love that trusts, that gives freely, is abased, while the love that doubts and calculates and first makes a bargain is exalted!

WOODRUFF. My poor child—

DIANA. [*Laying her hand on his arm entreatingly.*] Please, not that "my poor child" again. Call me anything you like—shameless, abandoned, but not an object of pity, a weak thing! Am I weeping? Am I maundering about my sin? Am I shirking or shifting consequences? I tell you, he has done *me* no wrong. He can't help being just man. . . . Either I must despise myself as what he thinks me, or despise him for thinking of me so.

WOODRUFF. Despise yourself—despise him. I—see. I—see.

DIANA. Then—ought I to marry him? Is it *right?*

[WOODRUFF *paces slowly up and down. A long pause.*

WOODRUFF. I assume he would pass out of your life and leave—no trace.

DIANA. [*Passionately.*] *That* has nothing to do with it!

WOODRUFF. [*Throwing out his arms in a wild gesture.*] Diana! Diana! . . . Oh, God, why hast Thou permitted this crime against this good man and his noble daughter!

DIANA. Again I say, the crime is not yet. Not a crime; a mistake, a sorry mistake. But would it not become a crime if he and I, feeling as we do about each other, stood before God and took the marriage vows?

WOODRUFF. [*Starting violently.*] Ah!

DIANA. Can *you* marry us now?

[WOODRUFF *seats himself, his head resting upon his hands. A long pause. At length* WOODRUFF *rises.*

WOODRUFF. [*Going toward her, and speaking solemnly.*] In this world, my child, we have not often choice between right and wrong. Almost always the choice is between the greater evil and the lesser.

[DIANA *draws her breath sharply; her fingers seek her throat as if she were stifling.*

WOODRUFF. You will choose the lesser evil.

DIANA. The lesser evil! A reluctant husband—despising me—ashamed of me—suspecting me—doubting me, perhaps! Afraid my child will be like me!

WOODRUFF. There is your punishment.

DIANA. Yes—my punishment—my hell!—mine—and his—and—[*she pauses, gazes out in despair*]—and my child's.

WOODRUFF. [*Greatly agitated by her words and apparent hesitation.*] Hubert must never know. Never! What *agony* his would be! Diana, how could you—how could you!

DIANA. [*Stopping her ears with her palms.*] No! No! I will—I will!

[*She rushes toward veranda exit to the right. In the left entrance from veranda appears* BURROUGHS.

SCENE XV.—WOODRUFF—DIANA—BURROUGHS.

BURROUGHS. [*Commandingly.*] Diana—one moment.

[DIANA *motions him wildly aside with an inarticulate cry and rushes off. He gazes after her, shrugs his shoulders, elevates his head and advances.*

SCENE XVI.—WOODRUFF—BURROUGHS.

BURROUGHS. [*Curtly.*] Ah, doctor.

[WOODRUFF *startles, wheels abruptly and frowns at* BURROUGHS, *who returns his gaze with open defiance.*

BURROUGHS. They want me to wait here. The ceremony is to be in the parlor—in there. [*Indicates doors to left, seats himself on sofa to left, drums on it nervously.*] Make it brief as possible, please.

WOODRUFF. Sir!

BURROUGHS. Cut the ceremony short.

WOODRUFF. You are disrespectful.

BURROUGHS. [*Carelessly.*] Beg pardon. I meant no disrespect. [*Notes* WOODRUFF'S *steady gaze—grows still more restless—glares at him—springs up.*] By God!

WOODRUFF. Sir!

BURROUGHS. [*Advancing to him and looking him in the eyes.*] Why do you stare at me? Is it be-

cause— [*Laughs in angry scorn.*] So, she has told! A hell of a mess—

[*Reënter* DIANA *at right. She is cold, calm and stately.*

SCENE XVII.—DIANA—BURROUGHS—WOODRUFF.

BURROUGHS. You have told *him*!

DIANA. [*With contempt.*] The secret is mine. It's always the woman's, you know—the victim's.

BURROUGHS. [*Stung to fury.*] My position gives me the right to demand, and I do demand, that you shall not chatter about, to your own discredit.

DIANA. Discredit?

BURROUGHS. Discredit. You will remember that you are going to be my wife.

DIANA. *Going to be* your wife? Why, I thought I *was* your wife. Certainly, you said it often enough. It was your favorite phrase.

BURROUGHS. [*Beside himself.*] You would do well not to taunt me.

DIANA. Ah, true. The fallen creature must be politic. Forgive me. Be patient. I shall learn.

[BURROUGHS *gazes furiously at her.*

WOODRUFF. [*In a low tone.*] Diana! I implore you!

DIANA. And marriage—real marriage—is founded on love and truth. Love and truth! [*She laughs*

scornfully. BURROUGHS *hangs his head and turns away.*] Love—and—truth! . . . [*To* WOODRUFF.] I want a last word with him before—before you—and *he—purify* me.

[*Exit* WOODRUFF *by door to left, with a parting look of entreaty at both.*

SCENE XVIII.—DIANA—BURROUGHS.

DIANA. [*Contemptuously.*] And now, sir—

BURROUGHS. [*Turning on her.*] Do you wish me to hate you?

DIANA. I prefer it to the feeling you've been entertaining.

BURROUGHS. My God! Have I shirked my sin against your father and you? Am I not doing all I can to wipe it out, to—

DIANA. To restore me to the ranks of the respectable? Yes. Yes. And I am deeply grateful. I humble myself at your feet.

BURROUGHS. You can't move me. I've given my word. I'll keep it.

DIANA. Yes—you'll save yourself.

BURROUGHS. Myself! Do you think I fear for my life?

DIANA. Possibly. [BURROUGHS *clinches his teeth to restrain furious speech.*] But certainly you fear for your good name—your [*with intense sarcasm*]—your honor. Most men have your poor opinion of

women's frailty under—[*with mocking irony*]—temptation. If this — this — *escapade* — [*he winces*] — of yours—should become a scandal, what would men say of—*you*? . . . Even your mother—

BURROUGHS. Leave my mother out of this!

DIANA. Pardon. I must not take the name of a good woman upon my lips until I have been purified. [*With abrupt change to haughtiness.*] But, we waste time. I came to tell you what I purpose to do. I marry you because I must, just as you marry me because you must.

BURROUGHS. That is not true—not as you put it.

DIANA. Tell me—if you were entirely free, would you marry me to-day?

BURROUGHS. I've told you that—

DIANA. Yes or no?

BURROUGHS. I've explained to you—

DIANA. No. And, after you had been living in those sewers of conventional hypocrisy again for a year, breathing only their poisons, with never a breath of the fresh, pure air of sincerity—would you marry *me*? [*A brief pause.* BURROUGHS *looks down.*] Let's not lie—to ourselves, at least. You marry me only because you must. I marry you for the sake of—[*She falters, regains self-control.*] But I shall not go away with you. You have been my husband. The marriage is dissolved. This ceremony will be a form —nothing more. You will stop the night under this roof—that must be. But to-morrow you leave here

alone, and I shall take care that I never see you again.

[*She is facing him, erect, calm. At her last words* BURROUGHS *starts back, then stands gazing at her, his shoulders heaving with passion.*

BURROUGHS. Not so fast! Not so fast! It's true, when I went away from you to that cold, formal home of mine, I did begin to doubt my memory of you—

DIANA. [*Jeering.*] At last, at last—the truth.

BURROUGHS. Your anger sets me on fire. You are superb! I *never* wanted you so! Leave here alone? No! When you take my name I take you. [DIANA *shudders, shrinks.*] I've got to have you. You've been mine— [*Fiercely, triumphantly.*] Yes, mine! And you shall continue to be mine.

DIANA. Never!

BURROUGHS. You shall! [*Rushes toward her.*] You *are* mine!

DIANA. [*Standing her ground.*] Never!

BURROUGHS. You are mine! [*He seizes her in his arms.*] Mine! Do you hear? Mine! Do you understand?

[*After a fierce struggle* DIANA *releases herself, rushes to doors at left, flings them open.*

DIANA. [*Panting and beside herself.*] Father!

[*Enter from the left* MERIVALE, PHYLLIS, DAGMAR, WOODRUFF. *They gaze in*

amazement from BURROUGHS, *standing dazed at sofa to right, to* DIANA, *at small table to left, with blazing eyes and surging bosom, pointing at* BURROUGHS.

SCENE XIX.—DIANA—BURROUGHS—MERIVALE—PHYLLIS—DAGMAR—WOODRUFF.

DIANA. Father, I will not marry this man!

BURROUGHS. [*Coming forward defiantly.*] I say she shall!

MERIVALE. Diana, what is it?

PHYLLIS. [*Seizing* DIANA *by the arm.*] Oh, Di—

DIANA. [*Releasing herself and approaching her father.*] I shall not marry him. I wish him to leave the house at once.

BURROUGHS. She *shall* marry me. She is mine!

DIANA. Yours? Not I. I am free!

MERIVALE. Diana, what's the meaning of this?

PHYLLIS. Don't listen to her! She—

DIANA. Enough! Father, hear me! Two months ago this man and I became husband and wife—in the sight of God. I took him—gave myself.

[*Profound sensation.* MERIVALE *starts, gazes from* DIANA *to* BURROUGHS, *to* DIANA *again.* PHYLLIS *clasps her hands despairingly.* DAGMAR *turns threateningly toward* BURROUGHS, *who sees only* DIANA.

DIANA. I took him—I gave myself because I

thought him a *man*—a man like you. And in the blindness and folly of my love, I felt as my dead mother felt when she lived in your arms.

[MERIVALE *staggers.* WOODRUFF *attempts to help him, but he pushes him aside, seats himself on the sofa to left, sitting rigidly erect.*

MERIVALE. Go on, Diana.

DIANA. Father, I thought him like you. But, thank God, I found him out in time. And so I am saving myself from this man who said he loved me while in his heart he was despising me. I was about to marry him. But I see now my first instinct was right. I was wronging you—was false to all you taught me. Forgive me, and send him from our sight!

[*A pause. Then* MERIVALE *slowly rises and faces* BURROUGHS.

MERIVALE. Begone!

WOODRUFF. Bertie!—

BURROUGHS. I shall not go without her.

PHYLLIS. Father—in a few months the world would know our dishonor.

DAGMAR. Good God!

[MERIVALE *looks round dazedly. Finally his eyes rest upon* DIANA, *standing with bowed head.*

MERIVALE. [*Brokenly.*] Oh, Diana. My poor Diana!

DIANA. [*Straightening herself haughtily.*] You, too, father! You, too!

MERIVALE. [*Striking his cane sharply upon the floor.*] Woodruff! Marry them at once!

BURROUGHS. That is all I ask.

MERIVALE. Silence, sir!

DIANA. [*Calm and inflexible.*] I shall not marry him.

MERIVALE. [*Sternly.*] Either you marry him or he dies. [*To* DAGMAR.] What say you, my son?

DAGMAR. [*Quietly.*] Of course.

BURROUGHS. [*Snapping his fingers.*] That for threats! This woman belongs to me. I will have her.

DIANA. Do you hear, father?—do you hear? He calls *me* his *property*!

MERIVALE. Marry him, or he dies.

[DIANA *looks from face to face—at* WOODRUFF, *at* DAGMAR, *at* PHYLLIS, *finally at her father.*

DIANA. I have no friends here—none. All—all, enemies. All, cowards. You pretend to love me; yet you would sacrifice me through fear of the sneers of strangers. You would force me to lie—to lie before God!

MERIVALE. [*Gentle but firm.*] You forget, Diana. You have brought this upon yourself.

DIANA. You ask me to atone for an error with a crime. . . . But I shall not do it. And you will not kill him—for, it was I who gave, not he who took,

and it is I who refuse the "honorable reparation" he presses on us.

MERIVALE. You shall marry him!

DIANA. You do not ask it—not your real self—not the father who taught me to be fearless and truthful, to hold my own respect for myself dearer than the opinion of all the world beside. . . . No lie has soiled my lips or smirched my soul. I am a pure woman. What this man did not, could not do—what no man could do—you, my father, ask me to do. You ask your daughter to dishonor herself.

MERIVALE. Diana, it must be. For your own sake. I am thinking only of you.

[DIANA *draws herself slowly up, faces her father.*

DIANA. Look at me, daddy! [*Their eyes meet.*] . . . If there were no one in the world but just you and me and that man—would you then demand that I marry him?

[*A pause, all watching the father and daughter as they gaze at each other.*

DIANA. [*Very slowly.*] Was what you taught me —*false?* Do you tell *your daughter* to—*lie?*

[*Silence, all watching* MERIVALE, *except* BURROUGHS. *He is gazing at* DIANA *as if he were seeing a vision that dazed and dazzled him. At last* MERIVALE *stands tall and straight.*

MERIVALE. You are right. [*Opens his arms toward* DIANA.] You are right—[*extends his arms toward her*]—my daughter!

[*He encircles her with his arms. A pause.*

MERIVALE. [*To* BURROUGHS, *calmly and restrainedly.*] You see, sir, you have no place here.

[BURROUGHS *slowly, as if dazed and blinded, moves toward veranda, left. He turns, crushed and haggard.* MERIVALE *and* DIANA *look proudly at him and* MERIVALE *draws* DIANA *more closely into his arms.* *Exit* BURROUGHS.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

DIANA'S *sitting room, the same evening. To the right, double doors into her bedroom; to the left a door into the hall. At the rear, the wide balcony that encircles the second story of the house. Along its railing creepers, an edge of planted flowers, with potted plants on the pillars. The window doors opening upon the balcony are very wide. Instead of curtains there are broad light-green valences, matching the walls and upholstery. The background is the tops of the trees with fireflies winking among the branches, and the clear, starry night sky. In the room, to the left, near a desk, a great lamp on a tall, slender pedestal gives a sufficient but not brilliant light. The furniture is simple, comfortable, tasteful—including bookcases, racks of guns and fishing tackle.* PHYLLIS *in dinner dress enters by balcony window doors. As she is knocking at* DIANA'S *bedroom doors,* DAGMAR *appears from the balcony. He is dressed as before.*

DAGMAR. [*Softly yet sharply.*] Phyl! [PHYLLIS *turns.*] And you promised you'd keep away from her.

PHYLLIS. Did you find him?

DAGMAR. Not yet.

PHYLLIS. What *shall* we do?

DAGMAR. Don't get tragic. Be human and sensible. Stay on the ground. There's nothing in life that calls for stilts. . . . He didn't take the train. That means a lot.

PHYLLIS. Maybe we're mistaken. Maybe he did.

DAGMAR. With you watching it? A fly couldn't have got aboard without your seeing. What a stupid thing it was for us to do—dash to the station after him. It's perfectly obvious, if he were the sort that would have gone, he ought to have been let go, and good riddance. We'll make a mess of things, Phyl, with our meddling, if we don't look out.

PHYLLIS. Go away and let me talk to her. What a fool she is! What a fool!

DAGMAR. You didn't think so this afternoon.

PHYLLIS. Oh, for a moment. But I soon came to my senses.

[*Goes toward* DIANA'S *door.*

DAGMAR. Let her alone. You'll ruin any chance there may be to straighten things out.

PHYLLIS. I must bring her to her senses.

DAGMAR. Di's not such a fool after all—that's my opinion on second thought.

PHYLLIS. What *are* you talking about?

DAGMAR. You were right at first—though from a wrong reason—a sentimental reason. That's the way with you women. When you're right, it's always in

the wrong way. It was so with Di. She did the sensible thing—though she didn't mean to.

PHYLLIS. Sensible!

DAGMAR. Sensible. And you'd see it, if you women weren't brought up without any real notion of personal pride, but simply for the matrimonial market. [PHYLLIS *turns impatiently away.* DAGMAR *detains her.*] Now, listen to me. Suppose she'd married him when he was thinking himself so grand and superior—what kind of a life would she have had? The worst possible—the *very* worst. No, he had to be brought up standing. And she did it—good and proper.

PHYLLIS. [*Somewhat calmed.*] That sounds well. But . . . That scoundrel!

DAGMAR. There you go again! Not a scoundrel—just an everyday case of—

PHYLLIS. You men! You stick up for each other in the face of anything!

DAGMAR. As men go, Burroughs is—

[*Enter by door, left,* MERIVALE, *erect, vigorous.*

PHYLLIS. [*Depressed by his evident cheerfulness.*] Father! Father!

MERIVALE. [*Shaking his head in good-humored rebuke.*] I suppose you'll never learn that worldliness isn't wisdom. Go away now. I wish to talk with your sister.

PHYLLIS. Father—I hope you at least won't—

MERIVALE. [*In a tone of finality.*] Enough.

DAGMAR. Come, Phyl. [PHYLLIS *hesitates.*] Come!

[*Exit* PHYLLIS *followed by* DAGMAR. MERIVALE *looks hesitatingly at* DIANA'S *doors.*

WOODRUFF. [*Outside.*] Is your father in there, Phyllis?

PHYLLIS. [*Outside, her voice not yet under control.*] Yes, doctor. But he's—

MERIVALE. Come in, Ben.

[*Enter* WOODRUFF.

WOODRUFF. I thought I heard your step in the hall. [*They shake hands affectionately.*] How is Diana?

MERIVALE. I haven't seen her. I've only just come up. [WOODRUFF *turns to leave.*] No, don't go yet.

WOODRUFF. I've been hoping she'd send for me.

MERIVALE. She hasn't even asked for me yet. I'm hesitating whether to disturb her. Ben, I've been dreaming the years away among my books—walking through the scenes of sorrow and suffering and failure called history. My girl has awakened me—my girl with her splendid, vivid sense of right.

WOODRUFF. Splendid, indeed. But—

[*He shakes his head doubtfully.*

MERIVALE. You were not convinced?

WOODRUFF. Convinced? It was impossible not to be. And yet— [*Shakes his head.*] What a pity the world didn't see what we saw this afternoon. Ah, Bertie, life isn't a matter of occasional great moments but of petty hours and days.

MERIVALE. [*Laying his hand cheerfully on* WOODRUFF'S *shoulder.*] If we let the light of the great moment illuminate those hours and days, they may not be so petty—eh, Ben?

WOODRUFF. They will not be! . . . What an inspiration courage is! . . . What a revelation of womanhood! . . . Bertie, I doubt not that young man has been awakened, too—awakened from the thoughtlessness of youth. [MERIVALE *clutches his cane, his face darkens, he half turns away.*] I'll say no more. Forgive me for saying so much. [MERIVALE *lays his hand affectionately on* WOODRUFF'S *shoulder. The two smile at each other.*] Why, Bertie, you look ten years younger than when I came this morning. And I feared—

[*He pauses.*

MERIVALE. [*Smiling.*] Feared I'd be broken? Because I find I've a daughter too proud and too brave to lie at any cost?

WOODRUFF. [*Smiling.*] What a man you are!

MERIVALE. And what a heart you've got!

WOODRUFF. God bless you! See Diana and talk with her.

MERIVALE. If I can without intruding.

WOODRUFF. Well, I'll take a turn round the garden before going to bed.

[WOODRUFF *turns to go by door to left.*

MERIVALE. You can go this way. By the balcony stairs. It's shorter.

WOODRUFF. To be sure. [*At window door.*] What a wonderful night.

MERIVALE. The moon will soon be up.

WOODRUFF. Good night.

MERIVALE. Good night, Ben.

[*Exit* WOODRUFF. MERIVALE *hesitates before* DIANA'S *doors, then taps softly on the floor several times with his cane.*

DIANA. [*Within.*] Yes, daddy.

[*Enter* DIANA, *in a flowing white negligee, very simple, with graceful lines.*

MERIVALE. I'm not intruding?

DIANA. *You?* No, indeed. Why, father, how bright your face is!

MERIVALE. For the best of reasons.

DIANA. Really? . . . *Really?*

MERIVALE. [*With his hands on her shoulders.*] I'm proud of my daughter—my grown-up daughter. I'd been thinking of you as still a child. And—this afternoon—I looked and—you are a woman—*what* a woman!

[DIANA *shakes her head rather sadly.*

MERIVALE. It's easy, my daughter, to face shot and shell. Countless millions have done that. But all alone, to challenge hypocrisies the whole world worships, face in the dust—there's courage!

DIANA. I'm not brave. I'm even weak. Weak!

[*He seats himself on the sofa, she walks slowly and aimlessly up and down.*

MERIVALE. No, no, my dear.

DIANA. Then why this—this desolation!

MERIVALE. You still love him?

DIANA. It *is* weak—isn't it?

[MERIVALE *takes her hand tenderly. Then, his face grows stern.* DIANA *glances at him.*

DIANA. Daddy, you mustn't blame him—not altogether. It was the fault of your willful daughter, too —the *equal* fault.

MERIVALE. Generous. Brave.

DIANA. [*Shaking her head.*] No—neither. I didn't refuse this afternoon because I was brave, but —because I loved him. . . . Do you understand?

MERIVALE. [*After reflecting.*] Yes, dear—I understand.

DIANA. And that's why I haven't forgiven him.

[DIANA *struggles for self-control, then bursts into tears, burying her face in her father's arms.*

MERIVALE. Diana—if—

DIANA. It's for the happiness that might have been —the happiness that could never be—unless love loved freely and loved *all.* [*She regains self-control.*] Oh, if he had only loved me!

MERIVALE. The shadow will pass.

DIANA. It all rests with me, father, doesn't it?

MERIVALE. You live in the real world, dear—the

world that's called unreal—the world within. And you're at peace with that. But—

[*He hesitates.*

DIANA. Yes, father?

MERIVALE. My daughter mustn't forget she has to live in the other world, too—that the world beyond our hills will punish her.

DIANA. I know. I've thought of that—all of it. This afternoon Uncle Ben said to me: "There isn't often choice between absolute right and wrong. It's almost always choice between the greater evil and the lesser." . . . I have chosen the lesser evil. [MERIVALE *nods emphatically.*] But—there's something else.

MERIVALE. You mean—

DIANA. Yes, father—my child. I chose the lesser evil for it, too. Nothing—*nothing*—could be so bad for it as a father who didn't respect its mother, a mother who had lost her self-respect. Nothing—nothing! But—

[*A pause.*

MERIVALE. Yes—dear?

DIANA. By and by—when it is old enough to judge—[*agitated*]—when it does judge—me . . . will it justify me? . . . That doubt will be my torment.

[MERIVALE *rises, moves to window door, gazes out. The moon rises, sharply lighting up his features.* DIANA *joins him, and they stand there together. A long silence.*

DIANA. Good night, father.

[*They go to the door, to left, and embrace.*

MERIVALE. Good night, dear.

DIANA. Good night—daddy.

[*They embrace lingeringly. Exit* MERIVALE. DIANA *slowly returns to window, pauses there in the moonlight, sighs heavily, goes to her desk, seats herself. She takes out of a drawer, reads and tears up several letters, with increasing anguish. She reads one that moves her beyond her power to control. She returns it to the drawer, closes the drawer. Then, with swift movements, she snatches it, tears it up, sends the fragments to join the others in the waste basket. She rises, gazes out into the moonlight, grows calmer. She goes toward her bedroom door, pauses to extinguish the lamp. As she turns away, a slight sound on the balcony startles her. She advances boldly toward the window doors, to see the cause.* BURROUGHS *appears, pauses just beyond the threshold. His dress shows some dishevelment and dust. He looks distinctly less the boy, more the man—subdued, humbled, but resolute.*

BURROUGHS. Diana.

[*He advances.*

DIANA. [*Rigid, cold.*] You will not cross that threshold.

BURROUGHS. [*Firmly, quietly.*] Diana, I've come as you told me to come.

DIANA. I? I told you to go.

BURROUGHS. [*His manner subdued, respectful, yet insistent.*] Once, when we were very, very happy—it was on just such a night as this—you told me if ever anything—no matter what—should estrange us—you told me to come to you—to make you listen to me, no matter how you might try to prevent—you told me to come to you, face to face, and say "Diana, I love you." Do you remember?

DIANA. [*Self-controlled with an effort.*] I remember. Now, you will go.

BURROUGHS. Go? . . . Where? . . . Where in all this world *can* I go?

DIANA. [*Moving still farther from him.*] You dare come here—here of all places—

BURROUGHS. [*Interrupting.*] Yes—here where I learned what I now know was love's primer lesson. Remember, Diana—remember every moment of those wonderful hours together—recall my every look and word. Is there one—*one*—that does not cry out, "I love you."

DIANA. But in your heart—

BURROUGHS. No—no—not in my *heart*. My heart was yours—all yours. I loved you all the time—always—utterly. From the first instant I saw you, for

me you stood apart from all the world—as the only woman—the one woman. Yes—I loved you. You know I loved you.

DIANA. No—no! You—

BURROUGHS. [*Solemnly.*] Yes. For better, for worse. You were mine, I yours. But I didn't—couldn't—realize what you were. I knew you were a treasure. My eyes told me that—all my senses. But I never thought to look farther—deeper—and find *you.*

[DIANA *trembles, but remains with her back to him, he several paces from her.*

BURROUGHS. I valued you. But, oh, my God, how I undervalued! Why, not even my own mother ever made me realize that woman, womanhood—is not body, but mind and heart—soul! This afternoon you showed us all what woman can mean. Diana, I was dazed, crushed. I went away hopeless. In the woman I loved I had seen the woman I adored.

[DIANA *gives a faint suppressed cry, but does not turn. He advances a step, but only a step.*

BURROUGHS. This afternoon your father said to me, "Love her, Julian. Her nature is a vein of gold." I thought I knew what he meant. But he didn't know himself. No one could have—until— I see you again as you stood there in all the glory of womanhood. Oh, Diana, if you were not so sweet, so tender, so human, I'd be afraid to venture to tell you of my love

now. But you *are* tender. You *are* sweet and forgiving. Diana—forgive *me*—*believe* me!

DIANA. [*Turning and gazing earnestly, hesitatingly at him.*] Oh, I want to believe—I *want* to believe!

BURROUGHS. [*Extending his hands in manly appeal.*] Diana—forgive—believe. I love you—all of you—*you.*

[*She advances a step toward him.*

DIANA. You are *sure*?

BURROUGHS. I am *sure.*

[*She slowly gives him her hands. He puts them together, bends and respectfully kisses them. A brief pause.*

BURROUGHS. May I—may I come to-morrow?

DIANA. [*Softly.*] To-morrow.

[*She holding her hands, they go to the window door, pause on the threshold. He hesitatingly puts his arm round her, touches his lips to hers, releases her, except one hand.*

BURROUGHS. [*Going.*] Diana—my wife—I love you.

DIANA. You do—now—Julian.

CURTAIN.

A POINT OF LAW

A POINT OF LAW

A Dramatic Incident

"The Library" at COLONEL PICKETT'S—*an old Southern country house near Bloody Ground. The long windows open upon a superb view of wooded hills and pasture lands. On the walls are colored prints of English hunting, racing, and coaching scenes, framed photographs of horses, an oil painting of a most aristocratic black stallion. There is but one bookcase; it contains a jumble of books on horses, cattle, sports, theology, and a few college textbooks.*

Against the writing table leans COLONEL PICKETT'S *young daughter,* GENEVIEVE. *She has a fresh, brilliant skin, an innocent, cheerful, pretty face. She is looking admiringly and lovingly at* ANITA HOLCOMBE, *leaning against the window frame and gazing wistfully toward the hills.* MRS. HOLCOMBE *is handsome, is about thirty years old, has upon her youthful features the shadow of melancholy experience. She is wearing a pink-and-white dress as simple as* GENEVIEVE'S *white*

muslin, but fashionable. In her big white hat are two great plumes, the ends just touched with a delicate shade of pink. She is swinging absently a pink-and-white chiffon sunshade.

ANITA. [*Drawing a long breath.*] How peaceful and restful it is here—how innocent!

GENEVIEVE. One gets so tired of peace and rest—and innocence. How I do long for something to happen!

ANITA. [*Looking at her sadly.*] And I—if I could feel sure that nothing would happen—that life would just flow tranquilly on and on, like this.

GENEVIEVE. You're saying that to console me.

ANITA. The truth won't make any impression on you. I shouldn't have believed at your age. I'm afraid you'll learn only too soon that in this world happenings are mostly suffering—or are paid for in suffering. A little intense pleasure—and you pay with intense pain—anxieties, disappointments, regrets.

GENEVIEVE. I'd risk it. If that's what's made you look as you do, I'd *want* it!

ANITA. Don't—*please* don't!

GENEVIEVE. Forgive me. I didn't intend to hurt you. Only—I *meant* it! And you won't forget your promise to have me visit you in New York. [ANITA *startles, looks away confusedly.*] You won't—*please*?

ANITA. No—no. I'll not forget.

GENEVIEVE. I've never seen New York. But I—love it! Things *happen* there. Will it be soon?

ANITA. [*With embarrassment.*] I—I hope so. But you mustn't count on it. You see, our plans—they're always unsettled. Vincent and I are wanderers—to Europe and back—to his place in Pennsylvania—perhaps here again when the house is rebuilt.

GENEVIEVE. What a glorious life! How happy you must be! And maybe once in a while you'll hold me up to the window so that I can get a breath or two of freedom.

ANITA. Freedom!

GENEVIEVE. Of course, I'm sorry your house burned, but—I simply can't help being glad, too. If it hadn't been for the fire I might never have known you. Why, we didn't even know Mr. Holcombe had a wife— I don't mind telling you now. When we sent over to invite him here because we feared he had no place to go, we were *so* surprised to learn about you. And then—you came. These three weeks have been the very happiest of my life.

ANITA. [*Embarrassed, color high.*] But I hadn't ever been to Vincent's place here till this summer. I came only three days before the fire, dear—you remember. And then, too—

GENEVIEVE. [*Helplessly.*] Oh, it wasn't really strange. Mr. Holcombe only bought here a year ago, wasn't it? And we knew him just a little. But—

we'd talked about him—you know how people will. And we decided he was a bachelor.

ANITA. [*With a forced laugh.*] A bachelor!

GENEVIEVE. He didn't *look* married. But then, neither do you.

ANITA. Genevieve!

GENEVIEVE. Married women always look so staid and—kind of sloppy. While you— What a beautiful wonderful surprise you were—

A MAN'S VOICE. [*From the direction of the veranda.*] Miss Viva.

GENEVIEVE. There's the gardener—about the flowers for you.

[GENEVIEVE *kisses* ANITA, *rushes out—and into the arms of* VINCENT HOLCOMBE, *who is coming along the veranda from the left.*

HOLCOMBE. [*Releasing her lingeringly.*] Good morning, wild rose.

GENEVIEVE. Good morning, Mr. Holcombe.

[*She laughs, blushes, rushes off. Enter* HOLCOMBE, *in striped flannels. He is a cynical, dissipated-looking man of forty, good-humored, selfish, spoiled.*

HOLCOMBE. Pretty child—that. How nice children are to look at—and what a bore when they begin to prattle. . . . [*As* ANITA *seats herself.*] Why so glum? And what are you planning there on the carpet with the tip of your parasol?

ANITA. [*Smiling.*] Something against you.

HOLCOMBE. [*Lighting a cigarette.*] Well—good luck!

ANITA. Vincent, I haven't spoken to you about—*it*—for nearly two years—and—

HOLCOMBE. [*Irritably.*] Good business! Don't speak of it for two years more. [*Looks at her with cynical admiration.*] What a beauty you are, Anita! I often wonder what the secret of your fascination for me is.

[*Shakes his head, laughing.*

ANITA. [*Passionately.*] Since you love me, how can you—

HOLCOMBE. Now—don't! I'm not going to give you the whip hand just yet.

ANITA. [*Imploringly.*] Vincent—

HOLCOMBE. [*Angrily.*] No use—not the slightest. Why break out when we're getting on so comfortably? You know it irritates me. Things are well enough as they are—for the present. Of course, some day—

[*He wanders about the room, examining the pictures.*

ANITA. Why do I speak again? Because a crisis is almost here. I've always been open and fair with you.

HOLCOMBE. Rather useless to be anything else. I'm not easy to trick.

ANITA. So? . . . Well, anyhow, I wish to give

you a chance. Vincent [*she rises and faces him*], you know how I must feel—here. When I see the dear old colonel or that sweet, pure girl coming, it seems to me I ought to be wearing a sign and ringing a bell—like those lepers we saw at Smyrna. Oh, dear—

HOLCOMBE. What bally rot! Besides, you oughtn't to care about anybody but me. That's true love—isn't it? No, you can't work on my sympathies to get the whip hand—

[*He breaks off as* COLONEL PICKETT *enters by the door to the right. The colonel is a Southern gentleman of the antebellum school, tall and straight, with white hair, mustache, imperial, and aggressive eyebrows. He is carefully dressed in white linen. He shows plainly that he is a simple man—both lamb and lion—a believer in love and also in hate.*

COLONEL PICKETT. [*With a courtly bow to* ANITA.] Always dazzling—and always in a new way. I've been urging Holcombe to stay on and let us have you a little longer.

ANITA. Thank you, colonel. But even if Vincent didn't have to go, we'd leave for very shame. Think! We've been here three weeks, practically self-invited.

COLONEL PICKETT. Now don't say that, ma'am. Why, I feel as if you were one of my daughters—'pon honor, I do. And Viva—it's been a great pleas-

ure to me, ma'am, to see how you and she have grown to love each other.

GENEVIEVE. [*Entering with a rush from door to left.*] Isn't it dreadful! Jennie and Bertha have come over, and I can't get rid of them for an hour at least. [*Links her arm through* ANITA's.] And this our last day together!

[ANITA *trembles, draws back, glances uneasily at the colonel, then at* HOLCOMBE, *who is seated, reading "The Turf." She shyly kisses* GENEVIEVE.

GENEVIEVE. I'll free myself as soon as ever I can. Then, by that time, you'll be through with your business.

[*She kisses* ANITA. *On her way toward door to right her father pats her affectionately.*

COLONEL PICKETT. You see, Holcombe, how your wife has won us all.

GENEVIEVE. [*At door.*] Indeed she has!

[*Exit, throwing a kiss at* ANITA.

COLONEL PICKETT. Trust a good woman to recognize another good woman.

[ANITA, *embarrassed, glances nervously at* HOLCOMBE. *He is apparently absorbed in his paper, but his face wears a broad grin of cynical amusement.* ANITA *notes it, compresses her lips, turns to the colonel.*

ANITA. Your daughter is a beautiful girl, colonel —in face as in character—and so beautifully innocent.

COLONEL PICKETT. She is, indeed, ma'am. She's been raised in our old-fashioned way. We know only two kinds of women—innocent ones and bad ones—just as we know only two kinds of men—gentlemen and scoundrels.

ANITA. [*Looking at* HOLCOMBE.] Gentlemen and —scoundrels.

[HOLCOMBE *twists in his chair.*

COLONEL PICKETT. That's it, ma'am. And we don't tolerate either bad women or bad men. In that way we keep our community up to the mark.

ANITA. Vincent!

HOLCOMBE. [*Looking up calmly.*] Yes, my love.

ANITA. Don't you think the colonel's very interesting?

HOLCOMBE. I'm sorry, I didn't hear.

COLONEL PICKETT. No, ma'am—no, sir—we in this part of the world don't turn our honor over to the keeping of lagging courts and shystering lawyers. [*Enter* JESSOP.] Ah, Jessop!—at last! And just as I was talking of lawyers—paying my respects to them.

[JESSOP *enters the room from the veranda. In spite of the heat he is in black broadcloth. He is carrying a black bag which* ANITA *notes and fastens her eyes upon as if it fascinated her.*

JESSOP. Good day, madam. Good day, colonel. Good day, Mr. Holcombe. I hope I've not kept you waiting.

[*He puts the bag on the table, draws a bundle of papers from it.*

COLONEL PICKETT. I suppose you've left the deed behind.

JESSOP. No—here it is. I've not forgotten anything.

[*He hands the deed to* COLONEL PICKETT, *who glances through it indifferently.*

COLONEL PICKETT. No doubt, it's all right. Yes—yes—sixty-seven acres. Yes—yes—seven thousand nine hundred and fifty-three dollars—yes—yes—it seems all right. Let Holcombe look at it. Here, Holcombe.

HOLCOMBE. [*Taking the deed.*] Oh, I'm sure it's correct. No use my reading it.

[*He goes to the window and reads with the greatest care,* ANITA *watching him with repressed excitement.*

JESSOP. Have you got the check ready, colonel.

COLONEL PICKETT. No—bless my soul. I've no memory left.

[*He seats himself at the table, takes a check book from the drawer, writes.*

ANITA. [*In a queer voice.*] I think I'll go, Mr. Jessop, while you gentlemen are arranging your business.

JESSOP. No, indeed, madam. We can't spare you.

HOLCOMBE. [*Coming from window.*] Fearful jumble of words, Jessop. And what's Anita got to do with it?

[ANITA *clasps her hands before her. Her expression is tense, expectant.*

JESSOP. Why—as I explained to her yesterday—in this state—almost everywhere, I think—the wife also must sign a deed. You see, she has her dower right in real estate.

HOLCOMBE. Oh— [*He laughs.*] To be sure. How stupid of me! I forgot.

COLONEL PICKETT. Ready, Holcombe?

HOLCOMBE. Let's get it over with.

JESSOP. But we must have two witnesses.

COLONEL PICKETT. I certainly am aging! I prefer white men as witnesses. So, we'll have to wait. Excuse me while I telephone Moberley and Brown to come up from the stables.

[*Exit* COLONEL PICKETT *by door to left.* JESSOP *busies himself at table with his papers.* ANITA *stands in front of her husband and close to him.*

ANITA. Vincent—please say you will—voluntarily. *Please!*

HOLCOMBE. Oh, I see—I see. You're threatening me with a scene. You wish me to think you'll refuse to sign if I don't gratify your vanity—for that's all

it is—vanity! But I know you'll make no scene. You'll sign, all right. You're far too sensible to stake in a losing game.

ANITA. No—you're wrong. But—you'll see. How is it possible for such a combination to exist in one man—such petty baseness and such—

[*She sighs, sobs, turns away.*

COLONEL PICKETT. [*Entering from left.*] I'm very, very sorry, ma'am. It'll be five or ten minutes before they come.

ANITA. What does it matter?

[*She sits at the table, takes up the deed, glances through it.*

ANITA. [*Smiling at* COLONEL PICKETT.] All this reminds me of a queer story. You know, colonel, Vincent and I wander about a great deal—meet all sorts of people—some of them very unusual. There was a man—I'll call him Smith—as it's just possible you might know him if I gave his real name. He was a business friend of Vincent's. I'd often seen him at the races with a woman I supposed was his wife. They kept to themselves always.

[HOLCOMBE, *who is at the window, wheels about and stares at* ANITA. *The colonel and* JESSOP *are so seated that they do not see him.*

ANITA. [*Returning* HOLCOMBE's *stare with a defiant smile.*] You remember them, Vincent?

HOLCOMBE. Can't say I do.

ANITA. Oh, yes. Why, colonel, he knows the story by heart. We've often talked of it. I really ought to apologize to him for making him listen to it again. Well—once, when we were crossing—Mediterranean way, wasn't it—Vincent?—Smith and the supposed Mrs. Smith were on the steamer. She was a poor sailor and so am I. It happened that our chairs were side by side on deck. Lying there, each almost against the other, day after day, we fell into conversation, and she became extremely confidential. She told me about herself. It seems she came of a good family in the country, down in Pennsylvania—not far from where Vincent has a stock farm. How far apart were your place and her family's?

HOLCOMBE. [*Defiantly.*] About ten miles.

ANITA. She'd been brought up quite quietly and innocently—much as your daughter has been, colonel. She had married very young—seventeen, I think she said. Do you remember, Vincent?

HOLCOMBE. [*Glowering.*] I've forgotten.

ANITA. Well, it doesn't matter. When she was nineteen, and her only baby had been dead a few months— I forgot to say, she was a silly, romantic creature, full of all sorts of dreams and longings—and that her husband—so she said—was a dull, heavy person, meanly jealous of her, keeping her close, like the inmate of a harem—when there was no occasion for it. A few months after the baby died—when life was hideous to her, she met a handsome, generous

young man—what they call "man of the world." To her he seemed a hero straight from a romantic novel. We'll say his name was Smith—I'd better not give his real name, had I, Vincent?

HOLCOMBE. [*Struggling with his anger.*] I think it'd be wiser not to.

ANITA. Smith, then. And Smith was always there when the husband wasn't, and Smith was—sympathetic—and loving—and plausible—perhaps in earnest in his fashion—and—she ran away with him.

COLONEL PICKETT. It was a scoundrel trick on his part. Why, ma'am, she was only a child.

ANITA. Only a child. Yes, she was utterly without experience. She had taken her sorrows and her wrongs, real and fancied, like a child. He promised that just as soon as she was free he'd marry her. She believed in him. And she didn't understand that what she was doing was, in the eyes of the world, not a freak of naughtiness, but a mortal sin—the unpardonable sin.

COLONEL PICKETT. Pitiful! Shameful! Thank God, in this part of the country we know how to treat such a hound as that man.

ANITA. But listen, colonel—that is not the worst. She was divorced—she was free. She waited for him to redeem his pledge. And the weeks—the months—passed—and he put her off—and put her off—[ANITA's *voice trembles.*] You should have heard her tell it, colonel. It seemed to me I was living it. I

could see—feel—it all—her youth—her ignorance—her aloneness—her love for the man who had won her heart—how she waited—then hinted—then begged—implored—the sleepless nights—the awful days—the anguish—the despair—

[COLONEL PICKETT *and* JESSOP *are profoundly moved by* ANITA'S *thrilling voice and manner.* HOLCOMBE *goes out upon the veranda.*

ANITA. Don't go, Vincent. I'll be brief.

[HOLCOMBE *sullenly returns, seats himself behind and out of sight of* COLONEL PICKETT *and* JESSOP.

ANITA. At last she realized that she was betrayed—that he wasn't going to redeem his promise—because—well, perhaps a queer kind of jealousy dominated his better nature—a desire to keep her the helpless, abject dependent, hiding from everyone except him. And when she realized that he did not intend to keep his promise—she fled from him—though she loved him—fled and hid herself—got work as a shop girl—as a servant.

COLONEL PICKETT. Splendid! Splendid!

JESSOP. A true woman, madam!

ANITA. But, colonel—as you'll see, she wasn't a heroine, only a weak, loving human being. The man we're calling Smith—he hunted her out. When he found there was no other way to induce her to return

he—[ANITA *looks strangely at* HOLCOMBE, *he hides his face*]—he married her. But, listen! It was a mock marriage.

COLONEL PICKETT. Infamous!

ANITA. A year she lived in fool's paradise. Then—she stumbled on the truth.

COLONEL PICKETT. The damned scoundrel—pardon, ma'am. And, of course, she left him?

ANITA. No. She was no heroine, as I warned you. She had no place to go—no friends. Her only hold on respectability was the mock marriage. Her only hope was through him—that he would some day do her justice. And he promised that, as soon as his father died, he would. But again he put her off, always some excuse. And she—she waited and loved—and hoped. When he—like so many—like Vincent there—became a citizen of this state to avoid taxes, she looked into the marriage laws here. And she learned—you can tell me whether she was right, Mr. Jessop— She told me that under the laws of this state, if a man lets a woman sign any legal paper—a deed, for example—which implies that she has a lawful claim upon his estate as his wife—that makes her his wife.

[HOLCOMBE *starts from his chair, smothers a curse, sinks back.*

JESSOP. Quite right, ma'am. She'd be his wife.

[HOLCOMBE *rises in extreme agitation.*

ANITA. Now, please, Vincent, please let me finish.

COLONEL PICKETT. [*Impatiently turning toward* HOLCOMBE.] This is most interesting. I'm sure you'll—

HOLCOMBE. Oh, certainly. Pardon me.

ANITA. Thank you, Colonel Pickett. Well, her chance came. He was selling part of his land. And he took her to visit at the house of the gentleman who wished to buy it. He was a gentleman much like yourself, I imagine— Smith took this woman—not his wife—into that gentleman's house to visit. What would you do, Colonel Pickett, if a man were to play you such a trick?—bring her into contact with your daughter—lay you and your family open to the danger of being involved in a scandal?—What would you do?

COLONEL PICKETT. [*Calmly.*] Kill him, ma'am—kill him like a rat or a snake. And if he escaped me, he'd have to reckon with my sons—and with every man in the connection.

ANITA. Isn't he noble, Vincent!

[ANITA *rises, goes to* COLONEL PICKETT, *kisses him.*

COLONEL PICKETT. Thank you, my dear. You got me all wrought up with your story. You tell it so well. But—I meant what I said. I'd do it—and glad of the chance.

ANITA. I know you would—and so would the gen-

tleman in my story. But—to go on with it—the man we're calling Smith either didn't know or had forgotten the law. And when the time came to sign—But I've talked enough. You finish, Vincent. What did Smith do?

HOLCOMBE. [*Composed, as the colonel and* JESSOP *turn toward him.*] Well, gentlemen—this man Smith, whose side of the story, by the way, hasn't been told—

COLONEL PICKETT. We can guess it. Damn scoundrels—pardon, ma'am—always make the same lying excuses. They—

HOLCOMBE. [*Interrupting, his temper on edge.*] At any rate, he refused to let her sign. She very stupidly let him see in time that he'd been trapped—

ANITA. Not stupidly, Vincent. Deliberately.

HOLCOMBE. At any rate, he put off the sale.

COLONEL PICKETT. But didn't she up and out with the truth? Didn't she give the gentleman the chance to give the scoundrel choice between—

ANITA. No, colonel, it wasn't necessary. They were all assembled just as we are. She managed to warn him privately that she was desperate at last—that if he persisted in putting off the sale, she'd appeal to the honorable man whose hospitality he had outraged. And he thought it over hurriedly and— To do him justice, he was always ashamed of his conduct toward her— He—well—he decided that he preferred to live. He was so fond of life and of smooth sailing

—wasn't he, Vincent? And he was fond of her in his way, don't you think so, Vincent?

[*Enter from right* MORERLEY, COLONEL PICKETT'S *trainer, and* BROWN, *his assistant. Both show signs of a recent and hasty toilet. They advance awkwardly.*

JESSOP. Here they are. Your story just filled the wait, Mrs. Holcombe—and it's sound law—sound law, ma'am—as I explained to you yesterday. [*Spreads out the deed on the writing table.*] Now, Mr. Holcombe, your signature first, please.

[HOLCOMBE *sullenly seats himself at the table. He pretends to read the deed again. There is a long silence.*

ANITA. [*Banteringly, with a certain hysteria.*] Now, colonel—really—in cool blood—do you think you'd kill a man for doing what Smith did in my story?

[HOLCOMBE'S *hand, holding the pen, pauses on its way to the ink well.*

COLONEL PICKETT. I'd kill him, ma'am, if he had been my best friend.

[HOLCOMBE *signs, rises.*

JESSOP. Now, Mrs. Holcombe—just here—please—just below your husband's. Sign your Christian name—not Mrs. Ladies often start to do that.

ANITA. Are you sure you wish it, Vincent?

HOLCOMBE. [*With a mocking bow and smile.*] Why, certainly, my dear.

ANITA. [*Writing.*] Anita—Hol—combe. [*She blots the signature, looks at it.*] Anita Holcombe.

[ANITA *rises, turns away to the window.* MOBERLEY *and* BROWN *sign with great deliberation and awkwardness.*

COLONEL PICKETT. Thank you, Moberley. Thank you, Brown. We're obliged to you. [*To* JESSOP.] That's all?

JESSOP. Nothing more—except the recording. I'll see to that, of course.

[*He glances at the signatures, folds the deed, puts it in the bag on the table.* MOBERLEY *and* BROWN *bow and exeunt clumsily.*

COLONEL PICKETT. Come, Holcombe—come, Jessop—we'll have to have a little refreshment, eh?

JESSOP. [*With alacrity.*] It *is* dry work.

[JESSOP *follows the colonel toward the door to left.* HOLCOMBE *remains motionless at the farthest window.*

COLONEL PICKETT. You'll excuse us, ma'am?

ANITA. [*Without turning and in a muffled voice.*] Certainly.

COLONEL PICKETT. Come, Holcombe.

HOLCOMBE. A moment. I'll follow you.

[*Exeunt* COLONEL PICKETT *and* JESSOP *by door to left.* ANITA *turns, slowly goes to the table, seats herself. She begins to laugh. Her laugh swells into a gale—*

hysterical, insane. She flings her arms upon the table, buries her face between them, her frame shaking with sobs. HOLCOMBE *turns, looks at her, slowly advances. Suddenly she straightens, rushes at the bag, tears it open.* HOLCOMBE, *quicker than she, snatches the deed.*

ANITA. That's right—tear it up. I'll say I don't want the land sold. Tear it up. I love you—you'd hate me.

[HOLCOMBE *looks at her strangely, laughs slightly in his cool, cynical way. Then he takes the bag, puts the deed in it.*

HOLCOMBE. Hate you? Rubbish!

[*Closes the bag, sets it out of her reach. Then he looks at her, nods, smiles.*

ANITA. [*Breathlessly.*] Vincent!

HOLCOMBE. You win. So do I. Now, for that drink.

[*As she gazes dazedly at him, he moves toward the door, with his habitual air of careless, complacent good nature.*

CURTAIN.

(1)

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